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**ROCK CREEK AND POTOMAC PARKWAY
GEORGE WASHINGTON MEMORIAL PARKWAY
SUITLAND PARKWAY
BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON PARKWAY**



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HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY

**ROCK CREEK AND POTOMAC PARKWAY
GEORGE WASHINGTON MEMORIAL PARKWAY
SUITLAND PARKWAY
BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON PARKWAY**

By
Jere L. Krakow

January 1990

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Two key individuals whom I interviewed also added information and insight to the study: Domenico Annese of Clarke and Rapuano Inc., New York City, and Joseph A. Ronsisvalle (deceased), Annandale, Virginia.

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SUMMARY

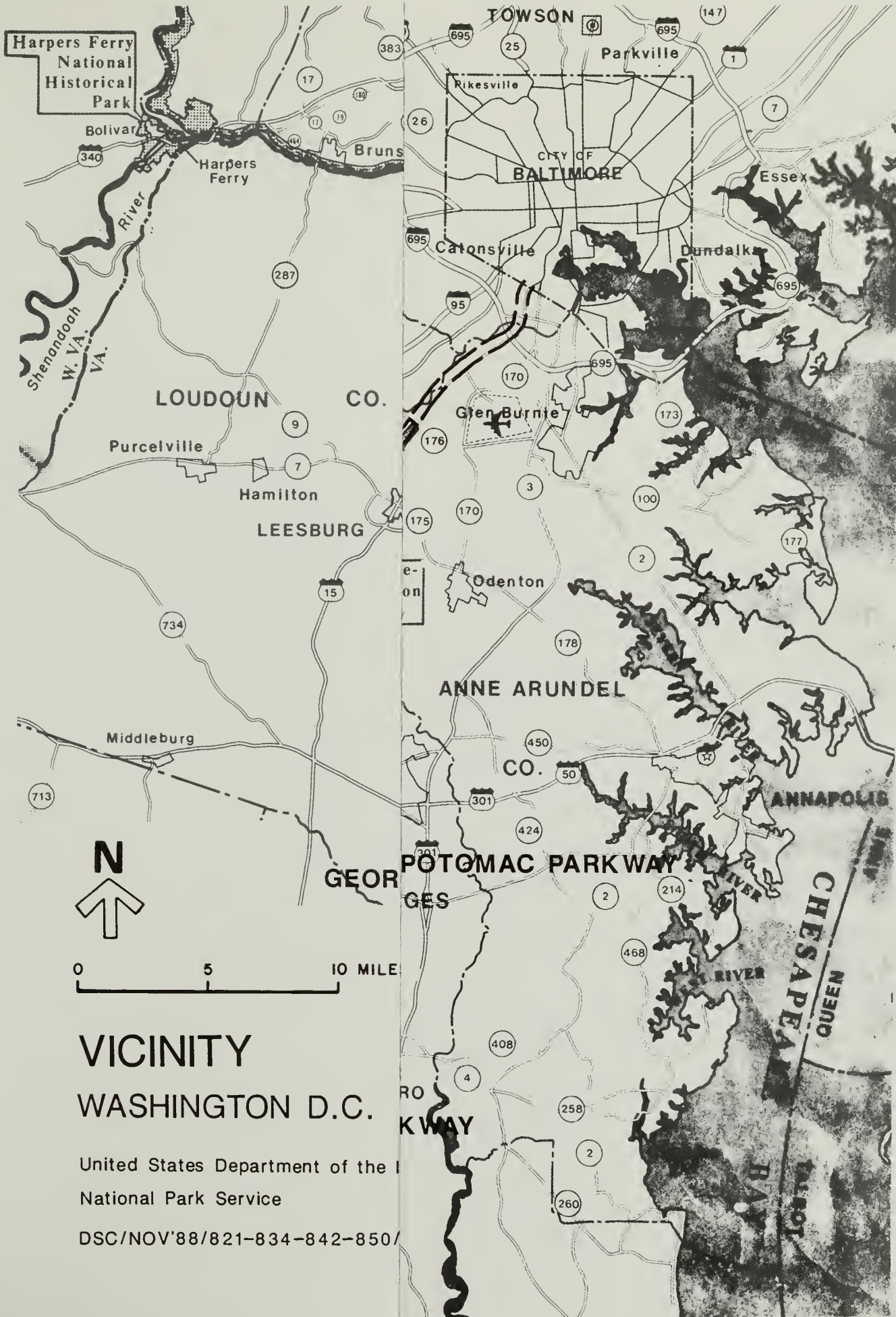
In this study of four Washington, D.C. (Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Suitland Parkway, and Baltimore-Washington Parkway), area parkways, a historical context has been established for these and other parkways of the United States. A stream of evolving interest in parkways, beginning with those in Westchester County New York, motivated proponents of parkways to advocate roads that fit the topography. A concurrent desire also prompted Americans to support parkways as a means of communing with nature, and escaping from urban blight.

Coincidental with the desire for parkways came the demand to carry out L'Enfant's designs, and those of others, for Washington, D.C. Parks and roads were part of the plans that included parkways envisioned in the McMillan Plan and enhanced by the Capper-Cramton Act. As a result of the efforts of advocates for improving entryways to the nation's capital, a variety of parkways were developed, beginning with Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway and Mount Vernon Memorial Highway.

Legislation establishing the parkways addressed the desires for proper entryways to the capital, recreational driving, and preservation of landscape and other resources. Parkway design features sought to provide a roadway that users would enjoy and that would fit the contours of the land.

As a group, the four parkways are integrated as a design to convey to citizens the importance of the capital city. The parkways illustrate principles of landscape and highway design. Moreover, they are associated with individuals significant in the planning and design of Washington, D.C. Though not fully realized, they are intended as an enhancement of the federal city and merit inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places as a multiple property nomination.

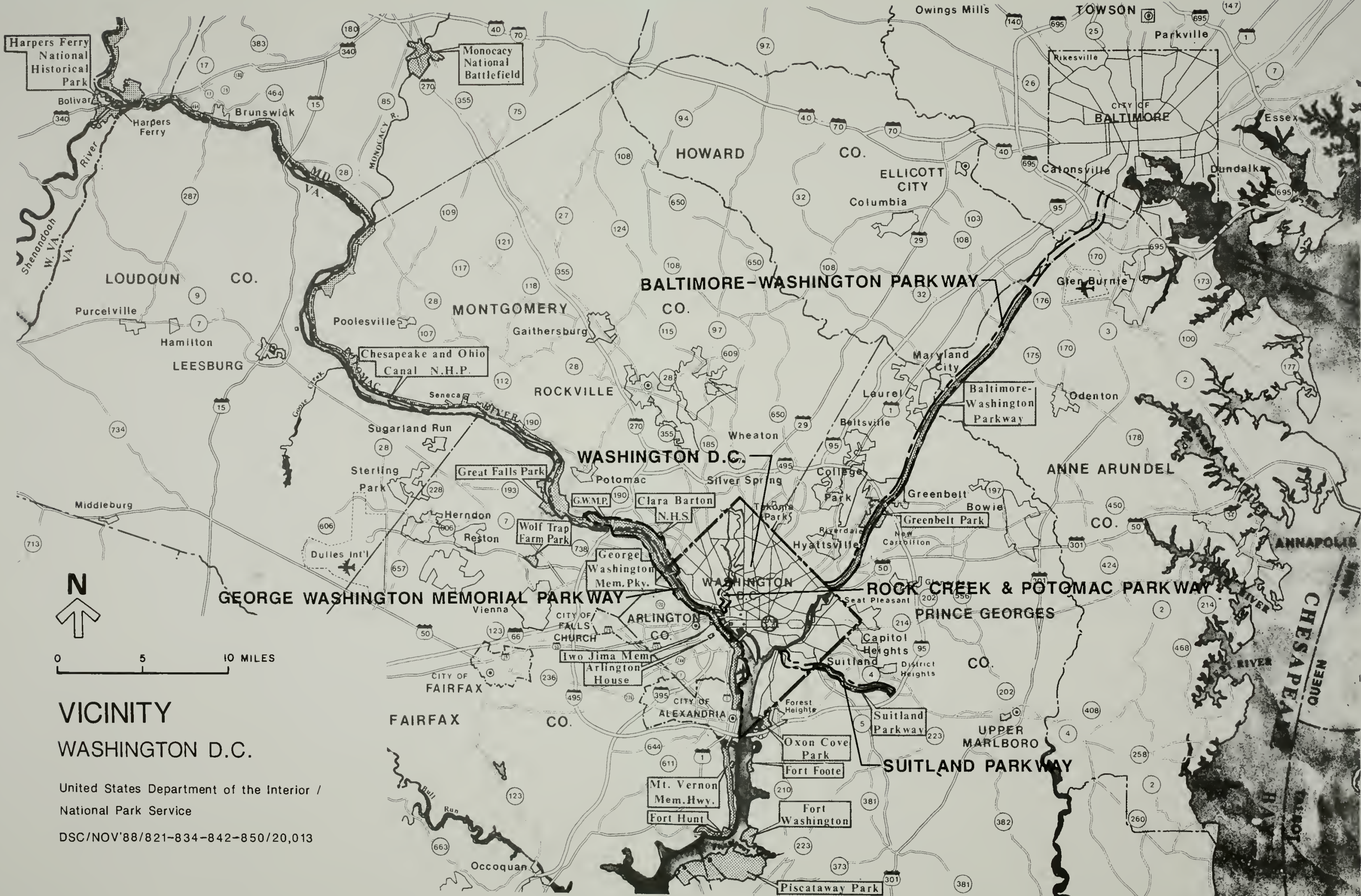
The parkways in the Washington, D.C., area have become an integral part of the urban scene, and great care must be taken to protect the characteristics that their proponents and advocates envisioned. Increasing pressures to turn these parkways into commuter arteries threatens to destroy the reason they were built. The line must be held or their physical character and setting will be lost forever, leaving nothing to remind us or future generations of our past. We will be measured by our legacy.



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND PARKWAY DESIGN

Nature presents many opportunities for interaction in the course of a lifetime, and the accretion of experiences by several generations is expressed in many ways in America's parklands. These lands contain the rudiments of experiences that are no longer available in forging a nation, and yet so basic as to engender a need to pass them along to future generations. Lands set aside for interacting with nature contain a variety of experiences tempered by the times in which design and construction occurred, and parks with roads through them are no exception. Parkways represent an application of technology – the automobile to a park setting – that provide a recreational experience linearly associated with pioneering a new land.

Since their inception parkways in the United States have faced pressures to accommodate more and more traffic. A case in point is the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, which is the focal point of the four parkways in this study. As manager of each of these parkways, the National Park Service finds it increasingly necessary to fend off attempts to add more lanes, lengthen entrance and exit lanes, widen bridges, pave shoulders, and add safety features whose design is contrary to that of the original – all to permit more traffic. This is another example of the contradiction between preservation and use.

For purposes of this *Historic Resource Study*, the National Capital Region of the National Park Service determined that four parkways be included. In sequence of construction these are Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, George Washington Memorial Parkway (from Memorial Bridge north and west only), Suitland Parkway, and Baltimore-Washington Parkway. Each contains unique characteristics, yet all are part of a design concept envisioned by Pierre L'Enfant, which sought to provide residents of and visitors to the nation's capital with an opportunity to experience the "connectedness" of the setting and the "pleasant prospect" of the surroundings. The concept of parkways providing a pleasing entryway to Washington, D.C., took form and shape with the McMillan Plan of 1902. This concept began with Mount Vernon Memorial Highway portion of George Washington Memorial Parkway, which embodied the idea of entryway.

Parkway design in the United States has evolved over decades, ever since the first attempts to imbue urban roads with parklike features in the 19th century. Aesthetically, it was born in man's desire to move with the landscape, to pass buoyantly over the terrain while savoring the natural splendor of the surroundings. The advent of automobile technology allowed more contact with the rural environment and conveyed a feeling of control over one's destiny through motion.

Although parkway design is not static, its tenets have been more or less defined as a result of more than a century of thought, theory, and application. However, the meaning of the term "parkway" has changed markedly since its earliest use, fostering confusion and vagueness.¹

NINETEENTH CENTURY DESIGN

The modern parkway design grew out of municipal efforts to build wider and more beautifully landscaped city streets. As early as 1869, Horace U.S. Cleveland, a pioneer in landscape architecture, recommended that the city of Chicago build a "grand avenue or boulevard" stretching 14 miles among its parks. The French term, "boulevard," designated urban routes intended to beautify the approaches to city parks. The first boulevards were, typically, straight courses formally adorned with trees and plantings that, because of the limited right-of-way, proved ideally suited to the city environment. They normally possessed driveways accommodating traffic moving in both directions, excluded commercial vehicles, maintained tree-lined sidewalks on either side, provided for private access, and measured from 60 to 100 feet in width. Later boulevards contained two and even three driveways, the space between driveways lending itself to plantings and landscape ornamentation. In the profusion of boulevards that emerged during the late 19th century, lay the precepts of 20th century parkway design.

One example, the "Jamaica Parkway," later called the "Eastern Parkway," was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., and Calvert Vaux in 1870, as an elaborate boulevard approach to the plaza of Prospect Park in Brooklyn, New York. This earliest named parkway amounted to little more than a visually pleasing combination of roadways for carriages and pedestrian strips lined with elm trees – a design concept formerly used with boulevards.²

Within a few years Olmsted expanded on his notion by designing a length of park land paralleling one end of Boston's Commonwealth Avenue to create what he termed "the Promenade," but which city park commissioners soon labeled "the Parkway," running along Muddy River from the Charles River to Jamaica Pond. By the 1890s, the expanding interest in boulevards, or parkways, was producing elements that would later dominate the field of parkway design, particularly the evolving principal that these roads should provide a pleasing and psychologically restful influence as they linked two or more

1. Christopher Tunnard and Boris Pushkarev, *Man-Made America: Chaos or Control?: An Inquiry into Selected Problems of Design in the Urbanized Landscape* (New York: Harmony Books, 1963), p. 160.

2. Norman T. Newton, *Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 596; John C. Olmsted, "Classes of Parkways," *Landscape Architecture*, VI (October, 1915), pp. 38-40. Even earlier, in the 1850s, Olmsted had designed overpasses in New York's Central Park to separate traffic lanes. Tunnard and Pushkarev, *Man-Made America*, p. 160.

parks. Of course all these elements assumed the use of horse-drawn carriages at a speed of some 10 miles per hour. Not coincidentally, in 1899, the newly organized American Society of Landscape Architects supported the establishment of a system of "National Highways" intended to connect both natural and cultural landmarks throughout the United States.³

PARKWAY DESIGN 1900-1930

A milestone in the development of parkway design came with the onset of a trend towards curvilinear routes and away from straight traffic courses, which had characterized boulevards. This change, largely associated with rural areas where property for road construction was more easily procured, featured flowing designs that followed the natural inclinations of the land and adjusted more readily to existing property conditions than boulevards which traditionally followed city grid systems.⁴

It was not until the second decade of the 20th century that "parkways" came into their own with professionally influenced, distinctive criteria. Until then, these roads had been designed for use by bicyclists and horse-drawn carriages. The emergence of automobiles as the major mode of transportation in the country necessitated rethinking the design factors for parkways. Recommended features in 1915 included two driveways for traffic moving in opposite directions; the development of bicycle paths and horse trails on lands bordering the driveways; and, particularly, designs based on existing landforms, improvements, and property abutments.⁵ Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., noted four basic types of roads that in his view qualified for the term "parkway." These were (1) "an elongated park" conveying parklike qualities throughout its length without the visual disruption of adjacent buildings and along which people might travel between two or more larger parks; (2) an "ornamental street," whose purpose was to increase property values of adjoining tracts; (3) any thoroughfare affording public travel under circumstances more enjoyable than those of ordinary streets; and (4) a roadway more or less transitional between types (1) and (3), incorporating varying widths of land with parklike features of turf, trees, and water, without attempting to screen adjacent buildings.⁶

3. Newton, *Design on the Land*, pp. 596-597; "Public Roads, Controlled-Access Highways, Parkways," *Landscape Architecture*, XXXIX (April, 1949), p. 113.

4. Olmsted, "Classes of Parkways," pp. 42-43.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

6. Frederick Law Olmsted, "Border Roads for Parkways and Parks," *Landscape Architecture*, XVI (1925), pp. 74-75.

The 13-mile-long Bronx River Parkway, designed for the exclusive use of motor vehicles, presented the clearest example of the special conditions that differentiated a parkway from other roads. Essentially, the term "parkway" had come to represent a broad strip of land designated for aesthetic and recreational purposes while containing a road. The width of the Bronx River Parkway corridor was not uniform, but rather varied with such factors as topography, cultural conditions, and property ownership constraints. (Interestingly, one view highlighted the potential "picturesque effect . . . of an irregular park boundary which gives sites for buildings which in turn might well add to the beauty of the park.")⁷ The road was specified for pleasure driving; commercial vehicles were excluded. Significantly, unlike owners of land abutting boulevards, owners of land abutting parkways possessed no rights of light, air, or access over the Bronx River Parkway. Access roads onto the parkway were few and did not disrupt the smooth flow of traffic. The parkway concept thus presented the means for traffic to move continuously, with minimal interference, under aesthetically satisfying conditions.⁸

The Bronx River Parkway, completed in 1923, became the model upon which other parkways of the period were designed. As the landscape architects concerned themselves with the features of the adjacent land as well as of the roadway they were designing, such eyesores as commercial billboards were precluded by the broad width of the parkway strip and further discouraged by innovative screen planting along the route. The road designs embraced curvatures calibrated to accommodate current speed limits. Occupying two driveways of two lanes each, the parkway gently snaked through the Bronx River valley while local cross traffic was diverted across bridges overhead. Special ramps eased the way for merging and exiting traffic. A notable feature of the Bronx River Parkway was the lack of divider strips of land between the driveways to partition traffic and enhance scenic integrity. Only in two instances did the opposing traffic lanes separate around hillocks containing timber. This feature became standard in later years.⁹

Subsequent construction of the parkways of Westchester County, New York, in the 1920s and 1930s, incorporated the features of the Bronx River Parkway and added others. Created to provide attractive transit between New York City and outlying residential areas, the Westchester network drew national attention. New designs focused on divided highways that occupied wider strips in less-populated areas, permitting more versatility in landscape design and promoting more of a visual union with the countryside. These designs presented greater possibilities for screen planting and radically limited private frontage along the route. "Roadbuilders," concluded one observer, "have extended their visions

7. "Bronx Parkway," *Landscape Architecture*, X (1920), p. 103.

8. Newton, *Design on the Land*, p. 597.

9. Ibid., pp. 598-601. Tunnard and Pushkarev, *Man-Made America*, pp. 161-162.

beyond the edges of the pavement."¹⁰ In addition, the parkways of Westchester tended to have more continuous banked curves to accommodate faster speeds. With the elimination of traffic signals, grade separation at intersections was achieved through bridge construction, and occasional access roads effectively controlled merging traffic.¹¹

PARKWAY DESIGN 1930-1960

With the beginning of federal parkway construction programs, the design successes experienced in the environs of New York City found ready implementation elsewhere. Already, the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, started in 1928 and completed in 1932 by the Bureau of Public Roads, offered a model that used the state of the art in parkway design and attracted national interest. Mount Vernon Memorial Highway was conceived to memorialize George Washington while improving the accessibility of his Virginia home and physically linking it to the nation's capital. Although it was proposed as a utilitarian north-south route, the prime consideration in designing the road remained aesthetics. As a result efforts were directed toward physically integrating the route with its natural environment. Strategic elements of the design included provision for traffic to turn around at numerous places, accomplished by the use of divided roadways; provision for bus stops through widening the pavement at designated points; construction of overlooks with sufficient parking areas at appropriate scenic spots; creation of a gently curving alignment conforming to the topography, except where the highway passed through the city of Alexandria; and improvements in landscape design and parking at the southern terminus, along with correction of the disorderly appearance caused by unmanaged foliage. Structurally, building the highway necessitated stabilizing mud river embankments with sand and gravel packed hydraulically and strengthening the grading so it would support the pavement. Planting was required to conceal a railroad corridor and other offensive views.¹²

10. Nelson M. Wells, "The Parkways Influence on Highway Design," *Landscape Architecture*, XLIX (Autumn, 1958), p. 92; Gilmore D. Clarke, "Westchester Parkways: An American Development in Landscape Architecture," *Landscape Architecture*, XXVIII (October, 1937), p. 40. For the Westchester system, see also, John Nolen and Henry V. Hubbard, *Parkways and Land Values* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937), pp. 72-83.

11. Clarke, "Westchester Parkways," p. 41; Francis Cormier, "Some New York City Parks and Parkways: Recreational Developments Made Since 1934," *Landscape Architecture*, XXIX (April, 1939), p. 124.

12. Gilmore D. Clark, "The Mount Vernon Memorial Highway," *Landscape Architecture*, XXII (April, 1932), pp. 179-185, 189; Wilbur H. Simonson, "Notes on the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway. I. The Southern Terminus at Mount Vernon, Virginia," *Landscape Architecture*, XXII (April, 1932), pp. 224, 228; Wilbur H. Simonson, "Notes on the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway. II. The Southern Terminus at Mount Vernon, Virginia," *Landscape Architecture*, XXII (July, 1932), p. 318; Frederick Gutheim, *Worthy of the Nation: The History of Planning for the National Capital* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977), p. 196.

The National Park Service and the Bureau of Public Roads undertook a number of parkway projects that further promoted existing design concepts. Around the nation's capital these efforts sought to beautify entrances to the city, incorporate historical sites, and provide scenic vistas. The George Washington Memorial Parkway, authorized in 1930 and started in 1936, added to the aesthetic and utilitarian features of the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, which it absorbed, while stabilizing and protecting the Potomac shoreline. The parkway carried forward many of the design elements used in the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, including grade separations, border roads for servicing adjacent tracts, median dividers, and a right-of-way often exceeding 200 feet. Another capital-area route that offered scenic and recreational opportunities was the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, which was designed to accommodate such activities as picnicking, water sports, and horseback riding.¹³

Skyline Drive, built between 1932 and 1940 to form a major feature of Shenandoah National Park, and the Blue Ridge Parkway, started in 1935, combined to ensure pleasurable driving from the start of the Blue Ridge in Virginia to the Smoky Mountains in North Carolina, a distance of nearly 500 miles. Although Skyline Drive lacked a median divider between the opposing traffic lanes because of the narrowness of the Appalachian ridge it traversed, both parkways strictly controlled vehicular access. They closely adapted to area topography and blended well with the surrounding terrain. Provision was made to preserve visual integrity over nearby farmlands by obtaining scenic easement agreements with neighboring landholders. Again, only native vegetation was used in landscaping, and required fencing reflected historically and culturally accurate regional characteristics in design and materials. In the 1930s, similar measures were applied in the design and construction of two other federal parkways: Colonial Parkway in tidewater Virginia, and Natchez Trace Parkway, in Tennessee and Mississippi. Like Skyline Drive and the Blue Ridge Parkway, these routes lacked median dividers because of anticipated low traffic volume.¹⁴

Common design elements and some new initiatives also characterized the parkways constructed in adjoining areas north of New York City. The Taconic Parkway, built in the 1940s, refined techniques employed in Westchester County using smoothly curved slopes to soften cuts in the earth and blend the construction into the surrounding vista. Although the Taconic lacked median dividers, its occasional pullouts and overlooks, although somewhat primitive and not completely separated from the roadway, permitted travelers to contemplate the surrounding natural beauty. (Overlooks built later included curbed buffer strips to separate parking spaces from the roadway.) Native species planted on the slopes

13. Charles W. Eliot, II, "The George Washington Memorial Parkway," *Landscape Architecture*, XXII (April, 1932), p. 194; U.S. Department of Commerce, *A Proposed Program for Scenic Roads & Parkways* (Washington; Government Printing Office, 1966), p. 127.

14. Newton, *Design on the Land*, pp. 612-614.

served to retard soil erosion while improving the scenery. The Taconic also incorporated independently aligned roadways, and its gradually decreasing curves further eased driving.¹⁵ As shown by the Taconic Parkway, several design elements of parkways were touted for freeways (later interstate highways): planted borders, few intersections, and improved safety. A major difference between freeway and parkway design lay in the advocacy of the former for occasional cross streets to encourage the development of adjacent housing subdivisions.¹⁶

During World War II, defense requirements transcended aesthetics as the motivation for building federal parkways. Suitland Parkway, started in 1942, fulfilled a military need for direct access between the capital and suburban Andrews Field.¹⁷ By that time, general design concepts already embodied in the several existing parkways had inspired federal recognition. In 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt urged Congress to approve an outline for a national highway system that embraced many of the principles of parkway design:

1. Location to conform to topography to avoid appearance of forced alignment.
2. For separated highways, two distinct one-way roads rather than a divided highway of fixed cross-section.
3. Bridges to be located so as to fit the over-all alignment and gradient of the highway and be subordinated thereto.
4. Added space for turning maneuvers, access for busses and for roadside businesses, provision for pedestrian paths and recreation facilities, fencing protection, etc.
5. The design to conserve desirable and irreplaceable landscape features, avoid needless damage to desirable trees and other growth and to lake and stream shores, and preserve natural sites for the development of overlooks, picnic areas, and other desirable wayside attractions.
6. Unnecessary construction scars to be avoided.
7. Borrow pits not to be permitted within sight of the road unless adjusted and recovered to avoid unsightliness.
8. All ground surfaces disturbed by construction to be re-covered appropriately with suitable vegetative growth, and added planting to be done where deemed necessary.

15. Newton, *Design on the Land*, pp. 602-605, 608. For examples of the types of foliage historically used for different types of parkway land, see H.W.S. Cleveland, "Variety in Parkway Planting: Arboretum Planting suggested for the New Chicago Boulevard, 1869," reprinted in *Landscape Architecture*, XX (1920), pp. 125-128.

16. George D. Hall, "The 'Freeway' A New Thought for Subdividers," *Landscape Architecture*, XXI (January, 1931), pp. 116, 118.

17. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Proposed Program for Scenic Roads & Parkways*, p. 127.

9. The design, combined with re-covering of disturbed surfaces and other landscape treatment, to be planned to protect the highway against erosion by wind and water, to reduce maintenance to a minimum, and to enhance the natural appearance of the road and the wayside.
10. The principles of landscape design to be applied in carrying out these standards of highway design.¹⁸

Although later stages of the Taconic Parkway, as well as similar highways built during the early 1930s, used median dividers, their adoption, oddly enough, occurred slowly. These appurtenances had real safety benefits as well as aesthetic and psychological appeal. The earliest medians measured only a few feet wide. Inevitably, they became at least car-length wide to allow vehicles to make U-turns at designated places without protruding into oncoming traffic. Such independent road alignment afforded by separated roadways created greater possibilities in the retention and scenic value of natural features existing in the median.¹⁹ Most early federal parkways did not use dividers, despite their clear advantages. Nevertheless, dividers figured in the plans of such later constructed routes as New Jersey's Palisades Interstate Parkway and Garden State Parkway, both of which, despite their names, were high-speed highways.

Completed in 1956, the Garden State Parkway refined earlier designs and represented continued progress in the field. The median strips ranged from 30 feet wide in urban areas to 400 feet wide in the rural southern part of the state. The design allowed experimentation with existing timber stands on the median, along with the erection of wood baffles, to eliminate oncoming headlight glare during night driving. Further, the sections of the parkway adjoining open country permitted the creation of flat, gently rounded, side slopes. Indigenous vegetation was planted to retard erosion along the route.

Because the Garden State Parkway was intended for use by higher speed, destination-oriented traffic, including commercial vehicles, its design incorporated strictly controlled means of access as well as longer, more gradual curves than earlier parkways. It pointed the way toward the super highways – termed "turnpikes," "freeways," and "thruways" – all of which fused the historic elements of parkway design. The somewhat more "interstatelike" Baltimore-Washington Parkway, begun during the 1950s,

18. "Public Roads, Limited Access Highways, Parkways," *Landscape Architecture*, XXXV (October, 1944), p. 55. At least one unidentified motorist reacted adversely to the proliferation of parkways in the 1930s and 1940s: "Parkways are so perfect they're inhuman. Miles and miles of scenery—trees, fences, walls, bridges—and never a town, never a house by the side of the road, friendly to man, never a lively billboard to relieve the dreary monotony. A parkway is like a night in an upper berth, something to be endured and gotten through with, the quicker the better. Give me a highway that's inhabited; a road that is not afraid of the world of people. . . ." *New York Times Magazine*, quoted in *Landscape Architecture*, XXXV (October, 1944), p. 15.

19. Newton, *Design on the Land*, pp. 608-611.

also incorporated a median divider of varying width. This parkway attracted further notice for its successful use of gently flowing curvature and its gradual blending with the surrounding landscape.²⁰

Another facet of parkway design that won wide acceptance through the years was landscape planting. This concept became so refined that by the 1950s, its proponents pointed to a number of professionally recognized tenets. These included such matters as the impact of tree growth on lighting, foliage type as appropriate background for traffic signs, clearance of planting near drainage structures to prevent root invasion, protection of trees in areas not affected by construction or contemplated traffic patterns, and planting of steep slopes with shrubs and low groundcovers to ease maintenance.²¹ Overall, appropriate planting was to conform to "the character of the surrounding terrain and the existing trees and other growth, and . . . the use or future development of adjacent property."²² Functionally, landscape planting represented a means for beautifying parkways and preventing erosion. Among other things, it screened structures and objectionable scenery, helped block the glare of traffic lights, buffered roadway noise for nearby residents, and ensured more economical roadside maintenance programs.²³

Similar standards of parkway design, originating with the early parkways, continued to influence the planning of all-purpose, nonrecreational highways. Applied pragmatically, parkway design promised to alleviate the crowded, unsightly, and dangerous routes that for years had joined the nation's major population centers.²⁴ In many respects, the parkways of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s served as prototypes for the interstate highways of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

20. Newton, *Design on the Land*, pp. 615-617; Tunnard and Pushkarev, *Man-Made America*, p. 167.

21. "Design and Construction of a Turnpike or Parkway. Typical Examples of Design Criteria and Specifications for a Proposed Turnpike or Parkway," *Landscape Architecture*, XLV (April, 1955), pp. 155-156.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

24. Tunnard and Pushkarev, *Man-Made America*, pp. 162, 165. For European antecedents and contributions to highway design during the 1930s, see *ibid.*, pp. 163-165.

CHAPTER II

PARKWAYS – HISTORICAL SETTING

A confluence of rivers is often a rich locale for historical development, and the confluence of the Anacostia and Potomac rivers is no exception. At that locale, and later spreading over hills and coastal plains, a major metropolitan area developed through the efforts of many including George Washington and Pierre L'Enfant.

The history of the District of Columbia has many aspects. Significant among them are roads and the essential role they played. A network of parks, federal installations and facilities, plus interurban locales are tied by routes, several of which are parkways. These parkways have their own histories and can be understood only in the light of the times in which they were built.

In Washington, D.C., at least, the definition of a parkway has changed with the period of development, the site, and transportation needs. And although its function as a road can never be divorced from its scenic role, parkways have been consistently patterned as formally or informally designed connectors within a system of predetermined destinations that include parks and monuments – and later, federal reservations. The credit for this belongs to the City Beautiful Movement.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Much of the influence on parkways stemmed from the experiences of the staffs of the various parkways in Westchester County, New York. Gilmore D. Clarke, principal designer for Westchester County, later chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, consultant on the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, and designer in charge of land use studies for the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, recalled the role of William W. Miles in the Bronx River Parkway effort. Miles, a member of the zoological board for New York City, became concerned about the Bronx River as it flowed south into New York City causing a filthy eyesore. He sought the help of Governor Charles Evans Hughes in arresting resource deterioration. For Miles, a visit with Andrew Carnegie in Scotland stimulated a vision for the Bronx River valley. While abroad he observed a small stream running through the village at Inverness that was "in sharp contrast to the filthy, smelly waters of the Bronx River in New York."¹ Upon his return he lobbied the New York State Legislature for an appropriation to study the problem. At first unsuccessful, Miles persevered and in 1906 the legislature passed "a bill authorizing a commission of

1. *Washington Star*, June 5, 1938, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

three, to be appointed by the Governor, to inquire into the advisability of preserving the waters of the Bronx River from pollution and creating a park reservation of the lands on both sides of the river."² The newly formed Bronx Parkway Commission included Miles as secretary and counsel. Through its efforts a bill was passed to acquire land for a park, clean up the river, and later, provide a road through the parkland as a pleasant entryway to New York City from Westchester County. In this pioneering effort, a parkway became the catalyst for protecting and embracing an urban river.

At that time, those interested in reform began to focus more on the urban scene and its contiguous rural landscape. The Age of Industrialism after the Civil War had brought about fundamental changes in American society. On the one hand, those looking backward sought a return to the older, agrarian ways when life seemed uncomplicated and conventional. On the other hand, industrialists capitalized on the exploitation of basic natural resources such as iron and coal. The changing transportation network, especially railroads, and the industrial sector, lured more and more workers to America's cities.

The reform movement, which affected all levels of government, dealt with numerous issues such as crime in the cities, minority rights, and pure food and drug laws. Most reformers were firmly entrenched in the middle class and therefore viewed the world from that perspective. Harvard historian Frank Friedel notes that they "believed in Social Darwinism – the idea of the survival of the fittest applied to human society."³ One element in that belief system was a faith in science and technology, which translated into the notion that societal ills could be corrected through study and investigation. A favorite device used by the reformers, evidenced in the Bronx River Parkway project, was the investigative commission. Former New York governors Theodore Roosevelt and Charles Evan Hughes used commissions effectively to address problems called to their attention.

Cleaning up the Bronx River valley by means of a commission investigating the issue of preservation fit well with a world view of solving problems through scientific means. The effort brought together those imbued with nature and those who viewed the future with optimism. A cleaned-up valley opened the possibility that an urban populace might commune with nature, yet suited urban reformers who could claim it for a victory. By 1923, the middle class used their automobiles for pleasure driving on the parkways, an experience most Americans ordinarily did not have available to them.

2. Norman T. Newton, *Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 598-599.

3. Frank Friedel *America in the Twentieth Century*, fourth edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), p. 4.

Concomitant development to the above emphasized the importance of preserving and interacting with nature. In his well known work, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Roderick Nash underscored the fact that in the early 20th century wilderness "had attained the dimensions of a national cult."⁴ Such defects as crime, slums, and corruption could be corrected by opportunities to touch nature through restored or natural landscapes like that along the Bronx River. Writing in the Chicago Plan of 1907, Daniel Burnham, active in the McMillan Plan for Washington, D.C., also expressed the need for nature thus: "He who habitually comes in close contact with nature develops saner methods of thought than can be the case when one is habitually shut up within the walls of a city."⁵

ENTRYWAY TO THE CAPITAL

The desire for a favorable entryway to New York City from Connecticut seems ironic. If a city represents much that is wrong in the nation, should a pleasant entryway be used to embellish its image? If the entryway into New York City is important, a proper entryway to the nation's capital is even more important. Many individuals lamented the negative impression gained entering Washington, D.C., from either Maryland or Virginia. Clarke called attention to this, describing the Maryland entry in 1938 as: "ugly and sordid traffic arteries entering the city. There is hardly a more indecent approach to a great capital in all the world than the approach to Washington from Baltimore over United States Route 1."⁶ His observation gained credibility when these arteries were compared with the handsome new parkway from Mount Vernon, which strengthened arguments for pleasing entryways into Washington, D.C.

L'ENFANT'S DESIGN

The origins of planning in Washington, D.C., however, preceded Clarke's concern by many years, beginning with George Washington's selection of Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant to design the city. Washington chose the site on the banks of the Potomac, "and set its boundaries four-square to the

4. Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, revised edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), p. 140.

5. Charles N. Glaab and A. Theodore Brown, *A History of Urban America* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1972), p. 262.

6. *Washington Star*, June 5, 1938, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

compass points. . . ."⁷ During July 1790, Congress established the location of the nation's capital on the banks of the Potomac, although Philadelphia remained the temporary capital for 10 years thereafter. This allowed time to adequately plan the site and start the development process that continues even to this day.

L'Enfant had no particular background or experience in planning, and he embodied "the artist of the army" concept.⁸ However, he had designed Federal Hall in New York City, was French (Americans loved the French), and possessed a fine reputation.

From March through June 1791, L'Enfant studied the natural setting of the proposed city and conceptualized a draft plan. It reflected the topography, tied grid streets together with major radial avenues, and provided for "nodes of urban development" with other radial streets.⁹ The president's house, the Capitol, and a ceremonial route, Pennsylvania Avenue were located in the plan. The setting of the federal city lay within a 10-mile-square area that had a unity that transcended time; from key points the entire setting could be observed spreading from the confluence of the Anacostia and Potomac rivers, including the coastal plain, to the surrounding hills. "L'Enfant consistently stressed his aim to generate development of the city throughout its entire area, and the simultaneous development of its several major districts."¹⁰

The 19th century saw the development of the Washington area at an ever-increasing pace. L'Enfant's street plan remained in effect, although it was altered as public and private buildings went up and development spread through and beyond the district. As in other cities, public transportation systems aided municipal growth. By 1890, the capital city, like other urban areas, became the target of reform as concern mounted for improving the environment. Planned urban design came of age and for some design became a panacea for solving urban problems.

7. Frederick Gutheim, *Worthy of the Nation: The History of Planning for the National Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1977), p. 2.

8. Ibid., p. 16.

9. Ibid., p. 25.

10. Ibid., p. 26.

THE CITY BEAUTIFUL MOVEMENT

A new wave of municipal revitalization emerged over the nation. As an urban reform, the City Beautiful Movement closely paralleled the ascendant progressivism of the age. This progressivism was exemplified by the thinking that social ills such as those in American cities could be eliminated by applying scientific approaches. Initiatives from the aforementioned faith in science and technology were best illustrated at the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893.

The City Beautiful Movement that developed around the turn of the century is still particularly evident in the urban park systems of Boston and New York – a vital element of which are parkways. Using these cities as models, planners and landscape architects assembled in Washington, D.C., to develop a similar program for the nation's capital. The McMillan Plan of 1902 called for numerous "parkways" linking the Great Falls, Mount Vernon, and Potomac River bridges and the existing parks. The plan credits New York, which "years ago. . . showed the way in Riverside Drive." Washington, D.C., had its own modest "riverside drive" (1904), which wound around the newly created Tidal Basin and up to 26th Street. It served as a literal and figurative prologue to the era of parkway construction.

The parkway was created as a byproduct of suburbanization; it was not an invention of the 20th century. Its role accelerated, however, with a growing sense of city-to-city regionalism and the rise of motoring.

The purpose served by parkways and boulevards is, roughly, to provide agreeable routes connecting parks with each other, the parks with the centers of population, and the suburbs and countryside with the congested districts. The first two purposes have long been established. The last is a recognition of the changed methods of travel introduced with the automobile.¹¹

Development of the automobile, which gave enormous impetus to the improvement of the American road system in general, has also had a significant impact on the development of parkways and recreational roadways. According to Charles W. Eliot II, "It is the informal landscape parks of all sizes, and in the parkways, that the automobile has notably changed the situation."¹²

As an added bonus, Eliot thought that recreation-seekers taking to scenic roads, might alleviate the inevitable and increasing congestion of national and state parks, as well as "atone for the exclusion

11. Charles W. Eliot, II, "The Influence of the Automobile on the Design of Park Roads," *Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 13, No. 1, October 1922, p. 36.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

of automobiles from landscape parks except under rigorous conditions," which he advocated.¹³ The speed of motorized vehicles, as compared with horse-drawn carriages, also lent itself to new design needs: convenient and unobtrusive parking areas, service facilities, and dramatic but simple landscaping that could be enjoyed from afar at 75 mph, rather than for its detail at a meandering pace.

Although the District of Columbia Division of Trees and Parking (established in 1871 and later part of the city's Engineer Department) was "one of the first public bodies to regard street-tree planting as a public function," the city trailed others in the development of urban green space. In 1890, Massachusetts, one of the forerunners in the City Beautiful Movement, became the first state to legislate the caring of shade trees on public highways. But it was not until the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933, that "appropriate landscaping of parkways or roadsides on a reasonably extensive mileage" was provided at the federal level.¹⁴

During the 1920s, the momentum and means for establishing a comprehensive urban scheme of parks and parkways in Washington, D.C., was reached. "There has been candid admission in Congress," reported one newspaper, "that the park system of the National Capital is not what it should be" – for which the poor economies of recent years were blamed.¹⁵

"The modification of highway design to conform to the principles and technique of landscape architecture" was a directed effort of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA). This remained true even as the engineering aspects of road construction improved because "the fundamental purpose of roadside planting operations should be to make the highway strip a mere foreground, or screen against what lies beyond."¹⁶ As late as 1940, however, an ASLA editorial reported that:

There is still a tendency to consider the work of the landscape architect as a last step after all the other important decisions of design are made and put into effect.¹⁷

13. Ibid., p. 36.

14. Wilbur H. Simonson, "Roadside Planting," *Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 26, No. 4, July 1936, p. 167.

15. Bill Price, "A Great National Park Along the Potomac," *Washington Times*, April 18, 1922.

16. Simonson, p. 171, 173; ASLA committee reports of 1939-40 outline the procedure for the collaboration between landscape architects and engineers in the design and construction of highways, "Landscape Design in Highway Development," *Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 32, No. 2, January 1942, p. 72.

17. Harlean James, "Comment: Tendency to View Landscape Contribution as Final Step," *Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 30, No. 3, April 1940, p. 117.

Despite the growing acknowledgment that landscape architecture was a mandatory component of road design, certain parkway characteristics remained subordinate. About 1940, traffic provisions, safety, and economical maintenance took precedence over landscape design; while landscape-design features such as location, alignment, profile, and adaptation to natural topography took precedence over horticultural embellishments. Nevertheless, all however proportioned, were crucial parkway elements.¹⁸

The site designs of parkways should have remained natural, with irregular groupings of plantings recommended: the purpose was to enhance the native vegetation beyond. According to one landscape architect:

In the open countryside it is a mistake to use exotic plants, or anything which is not indigenous to the general region and to the particular type of topography at hand. . . Native materials should be used not only because they are likely to be more permanent than others, . . .but most important of all, because the effect of regional individuality may be retained.¹⁹

Thus, during the first half of the 20th century, a recognized set of design criteria evolved that were common to all parkway construction, such as buffered right-of-way and limited access. These were initiated with the Westchester County, parkway system of the early 1920s, directed by Gilmore Clarke, a landscape architect who also greatly influenced parkway development in Washington, D.C. As technology improved and recreational goals changed, additional motivations altered the appearance and use of these roads until after World War II, when parkway development was, for all practical purposes, superseded by modern highway construction.

OVERSIGHT COMMISSIONS

The McMillan Plan, named for Senator James McMillan of Michigan, Chairman of the Senate District Committee, guided the development of the nation's capital. For the federal city, the McMillan Plan of 1902, based on L'Enfant's original plan, served as a means for revamping the mall, developing a park system, and grouping major buildings.

Specific parkway routes are identified in a conceptual fashion. Two of these later became the George Washington Memorial Parkway, on both sides of the Potomac River, and Rock Creek and Potomac

18. Arthur R. Nichols, "Landscape Design in Highway Development," *Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 30, No. 3, April 1940, p. 115.

19. Malcolm Dill, "Planting in Streets, Parkways, Highways, and Byways," *Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 22, No. 2, January 1932, pp. 129-131.

Parkway, from Potomac Park to the National Zoo. Another linkage of parks envisioned in the plan used the natural topography to tie Civil War sites into a proposed Fort Drive. Based on the Columbian Exposition's design concepts, the design efforts of Washington, D.C., inaugurated the City Beautiful Movement.

Overall, the McMillan Commission's efforts conveyed the capital into the 20th century. It placed the district into a regional context, improved the parklands, and gave direction to the entire city. The commission placed the railroad underground, extended architectural guidelines to include more than just buildings, and addressed the design of the flood plain.

After the McMillan Commission had issued its report and disbanded, several new agencies were given the responsibilities for planning and parks. In 1910, the Commission of Fine Arts began to implement the recommendations of the McMillan Plan. The duties of this commission were to "advise on the location of statues, fountains, and monuments in the public squares, streets, and parks in the District of Columbia" and to make recommendations concerning public buildings.²⁰ During 1924, the newly established National Capital Park Commission assumed some of the responsibilities and, through reorganization, was replaced in 1926, by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCP & PC). The main purpose of this commission was to implement the City Beautiful Movement. Both bodies consulted with the Commission of Fine Arts on planning and land acquisition matters for the district and for adjacent areas in Maryland and Virginia.

Parkways and large parks were the principal focus of the "work program" of the NCP & PC and were "basic elements in City Beautiful planning."²¹ As automobile traffic increased throughout the 1920s, apprehension over its impact in metropolitan Washington mounted. A recommendation of the McMillan Commission urging connecting parks by roads found expression, in part, with parkways.

EVOLUTION OF THE URBAN PARKWAY

Many cities in the United States contain parkways showing a range from the very earliest designs to those tending toward simply moving vehicles across the landscape. Those in the Washington, D.C., area represent designs that vary from those similar to the earlier Westchester County parkways to that of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway.

20. Ibid., p. 152.

21. Ibid., p. 171.

The ostensible purpose of a parkway is to separate users into two distinct groups: recreational and commercial. During the early decades of automobile usage, the greatest proportion of parkway use was devoted to recreation. But in the late 1920s, when the emphasis changed from the pastime of travelling to simply "arriving," so too changed road design. The NCP & PC indicated:

There are and should be in the development of plans. . . parkways, to serve as lines of pleasure traffic; but in another sense part of the thoroughfare system of the District. There is overlapping there of the two types of functions. We need to be careful. . . that it does not extend too far.²²

NCP & PC member Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., cited only two criteria that served as design guides – "controlling purposes" and local physical conditions. From these four types of parkways emerge: an elongated park, a glorified and ornamental street, and:

A thoroughfare, boulevard, or parkway, the prime purpose of which is to enable the public to travel from one part of its course to another under conditions which are made more enjoyable by almost any means, than those of an ordinary city street.²³

The fourth parkway type, "somewhat intermediate and transitional between the first and the third" type, is a border treatment that does not attempt to buffer surrounding buildings and often places the roadway to one side of the green space and waterway. This "border parkway" was later cited in a Washington-Baltimore regional study that required "eventual acquisition [of] selected stream valley 'strip parks' [to] be protected by public purchase of scenic easements in all parks of the area." Although these border parkways do not possess extraordinary scenic qualities, they protect the flood plain and "assure provision of open spaces to prevent uninterrupted built-up areas."²⁴

During the 1930s, one application of the term "parkway" hinged on use and legal access. All parkways, highways, and freeways, involve public land; however, only parkways are devoted to recreation above movement. And only highways allow adjacent landowners to retain rights of light, air, or access.²⁵

22. Minutes of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, September 16-18, 1927, National Archives, Record Group 328.

23. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., "Memorandum as to 'Border Roads' for Parkway and Parks," September 25, 1925, pp. 1-3, National Archives, Record Group 66, Box 156.

24. Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, "Regional Planning Report IV: Baltimore-Washington-Annapolis Area," November 1937, p. 2, 34.

25. Ibid., p. 60.

This is supported by the casually synonymous use of the terms "freeway" and "parkway" within the context of landscape alone, rather than all aspects of the entire thoroughfare. For instance, a freeway was characterized by one planner as about 100 feet wide with a center pavement "flanked by 20-foot strips of parkway, planted with trees, ground covers, shrubs, and hedges . . .adequate for a landscape composition of varied interest."²⁶ Shared features include planted borders instead of billboards and business frontage, reduced traffic for improved travel time, and travel safety. This type of road was considered particularly effective in an area where residential and business subdivisions were slated, and it was destined to reorient transportation patterns – a setting particularly relevant to the Baltimore-Washington corridor development.

Legally, a parkway was designed simply as "an attenuated park with a road through it." However, the government did not address general parkway guidelines until the Regulations and Procedure to Govern the Acquisition of Right-of-Way for Parkway was approved by Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes on February 8, 1935.²⁷ These regulations were the foundation for a set of eight characteristics intended to differentiate parkways from ordinary highways, and represent the culmination of 30 years of modern parkway planning – designated, ironically, just as the highway needs of the nation were about to shift away from recreational motoring. Specifications of regulations included limited to noncommercial traffic; a ban on unsightly roadside developments; a wider than average right-of-way buffer; no frontage or access rights; preference for a new site to avoid already congested areas; best access to native scenery; the elimination of major grade crossings; and well-distanced entrance and exit points to reduce traffic interruptions and increase safety.²⁸ Collectively, these ensured a self-contained, well-preserved, and safe thoroughfare.

Despite these National Park Service ideals, in 1944, the Department of the Interior complained that: "To date, Congress has not defined parkways. Legislation pertaining to parkways is piecemeal and lacks uniformity."²⁹

26. George D. Hall, "The 'Freeway', A New Thought for Subdividers, " *Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (January 1931), pp. 115-118.

27. National Capital Park and Planning Commission, "Comments on Report of Maryland State Planning Commission on State Recreational Areas, unpublished 1938?, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126; Memorandum for A.E. Demaray, Appendix A, Minutes of National Capital Park and Planning Commission, March 16-17, 1944, p. 2, National Archives, Record Group 328.

28. Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Williss, *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s*, Washington, D.C.: Denver Service Center, 1983, p. 146; ASLA fellow Laurie D. Cox identified the same standards in an article, "Appearance: Essential Element in Superhighway Plans," *Landscape Architecture*, Vol 32, No. 2, January 1942, p. 56.

29. Memo to Demaray, Appendix A, p. 1.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKWAY SYSTEM

In Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia, the National Capital Region administers several parkways. The major components include Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Suitland Parkway, and Baltimore-Washington Parkway. Other elements of the parkway system proposed for the city never came to fruition. These include the Fort Circle Drive, a proposed connection of some 40 Civil War fortifications that once encircled the city. Two extensive links with George Washington Memorial Parkway also remain unbuilt: a parkway along the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal route between Carderock and Cumberland, Maryland, which would have served as a ceremonial entry to the city, and a similar route in Maryland along the Potomac River south to Fort Washington. Interpark connections in the city shown in the McMillan Plan were all lost to land development before the right-of-way could be acquired. Despite these gaps, a system of largely complete parkways does exist in the capital.

The vision of a national capital laid out along wide avenues and ceremonial routes, with parks and formal city entrances, began with the original design scheme for the city by L'Enfant. His 1791 plan for the federal city incorporates political, residential, and commercial centers, as well as waterways such as the Potomac and Anacostia (eastern branch) rivers, two canals, and Rock Creek with its tributaries.

With the urban plans of Paris and other world capitals in mind, L'Enfant surveyed the site of the future capital from all directions, including the north approach from Baltimore, "which offered travelers a synoptic view of the town and its natural setting from the hills above the Bladensburg Road."³⁰ Among the guidelines for his plan are thoroughfares "to not merely contrast with the general regularity, not to provide a greater variety of seats with pleasant prospects. . .but principally to connect each part of the city."³¹ In addition to "outroads" identified on William T. Partridge's 1926 study of plans by L'Enfant and his surveyor, William Ellicott, a "city entrance" occupies a prominent position on the Potomac River in the approximate area where the Baltimore-Washington Parkway enters the city today.³²

30. Gutheim, Frederick, *Worthy of a Nation: The History of Planning for the National Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1977), p. 20.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

New and extended modes of transportation dominated the 19th century. For service and speed, a new form superseded those provided by water and roadways.

A rail line began operating between Baltimore and Washington in 1835, bettering the traditional stage travel time by half.³³ This Baltimore & Ohio Railroad opened a direct line to "Washington City" and encouraged regional development between the capital and Baltimore. At the same time, a variety of crossroad towns and farms steadily grew up within the District's 10-mile boundaries. The area along and east of the Anacostia River remained an exception to the growth that occurred elsewhere; it was "an area of commanding panoramic views and a hilly topography."³⁴

The first attempt to extend L'Enfant's design beyond its original limits at Florida Avenue came in the 1890s with two pieces of ineffectual legislation, the 1893 and 1898 Highway Acts. Authorization provided for a plan extending L'Enfant's street plans; it took into account already established subdivisions, but failed to address funding or offer an agenda for implementation. The "Permanent System of Highways Plan," however, became the foundation of the McMillan Commission's revival of L'Enfant's original, grand urban scheme.

Several nationwide movements contributed to the urban development of Washington, D.C.: the unparalleled success of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, which inspired comprehensive and formally integrated city plans that included a generous landscape component, the essence of the City Beautiful Movement; the increasing popularity and affordability of the automobile, which necessitated adequate roadways and service facilities; and crowding and poverty, which rendered the out-of-doors a popular recreation destination.

Three local events drew the focus to Washington, D.C.: (1) "A small group of the country's best-known designers" assembled to coordinate the centennial celebration of the "removal of government" to the city; (2) the American Institute of Architects addressed sculpture, landscape, and public-building design issues at its 1900 convention; and (3) Senator James McMillan of Michigan orchestrated the creation of the Senate Park Commission. The highly influential McMillan Commission, in turn, advised the formation of a team of professionals "eminent in their professions who shall consider the subject of the location and grouping of public buildings and monuments to be erected in the District of Columbia and the development of the entire park system of the District of Columbia."³⁵

33. Ibid., p. 49.

34. Ibid., p. 108.

35. Ibid., pp. 113, 116.

Senate Park Commission members included Charles Eliot II, whose father designed Boston's comprehensive park system and worked at the Olmsted brothers' firm; Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., son of America's preeminent landscape architect and collaborator on the 1893 Columbian Exposition; leading architects Charles F. McKim and Daniel Burnham, both of whom worked on the Columbian Exposition; and sculptor August Saint-Gaudens, who joined the team later.

Charles Moore, McMillan's secretary, wrote the report and later served 27 years on the Commission of Fine Arts.

In addition to downtown development, the McMillan Commission recommended a series of drives and park connections around the city: in Virginia along the Potomac River down to Mount Vernon; in Maryland and Washington, D.C., up to Great Falls; a Fort Drive to connect about 40 historic Civil War sites; and to enlarge and embellish Rock Creek Park for recreational use.

The City Beautiful movement in Washington. . .was swept along to include city entrances, parkways, boulevards, monumental bridges, and entire streets.³⁶

This was followed by the Commission of Fine Arts' (CFA, established in 1910) recommendation in 1918, for a "permanent system of highways [to] be revised to allow for the new park schemes." Crucial to a citywide network of local and "grand entrance" parkways was the Olmsted brothers' urging protection of the Rock Creek Park preserve in 1917. This idea was followed by an Army Corps of Engineers' recommendation for the acquisition of 400-foot strips of land along both sides of Rock Creek tributaries in undeveloped areas of the District and neighboring Montgomery County, Maryland.³⁷

During its short past America had grown with a rich diversity of population. Professions (like landscape architecture), reform impulses, and a desire to improve the urban setting all found expression in key locales such as Washington, D.C., where L'Enfant's early efforts provided a basis for application of new ideas about urban design. Parkway became just one of many attempts to enhance the physical setting along the lower Potomac. The first application began with Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway.

36. Ibid., p. 135.

37. Ibid., p. 145.

CHAPTER III

ROCK CREEK AND POTOMAC PARKWAY

Rock Creek, which flows southward from Maryland into the District of Columbia, is the site of Rock Creek Park (established 1890) and Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway (established 1913). Antecedents of this parkway actually predate the Westchester County parkways. The parkway now extends from just north of Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bridge to the south entrance of the tunnel at the National Zoological Park. It covers a distance of 2-1/2 miles, and comprises 174.23 acres/Reservation 360 (see map). The roadway officially opened in October 1935, although construction had begun in the mid-1920s, and segments had been used before full completion. As a strip of parkland with a road through it, the parkway officials intended to preserve a natural area and provide a transportation route during "rush periods." The first parkway constructed in the Washington, D.C., area, it exemplifies a road that preserves resources, links the monumental core to residential areas to the north and west, and illustrates the continuum from the horse and carriage to the automobile.

DESCRIPTION

Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway is jointly administered. National Capital Parks – Central administers the portion south of Virginia Avenue past the John F. Kennedy Center; Rock Creek Park administers the 2.15 miles between Virginia Avenue and Calvert Street. In June 1989, the average daily (24-hour) vehicle count between South Waterside Drive and P Street numbered 62,075 vehicles.¹ The ever-increasing use of this parkway by commuters has diluted the initial reason for the establishment. Development has continued to pressure the horizons of the parkway, and driving as a form of recreation is tempered by excessive commuter traffic. As urban pressures continue to mount, park managers often find themselves in the unenviable position of trying to protect resources while accommodating higher traffic volume.

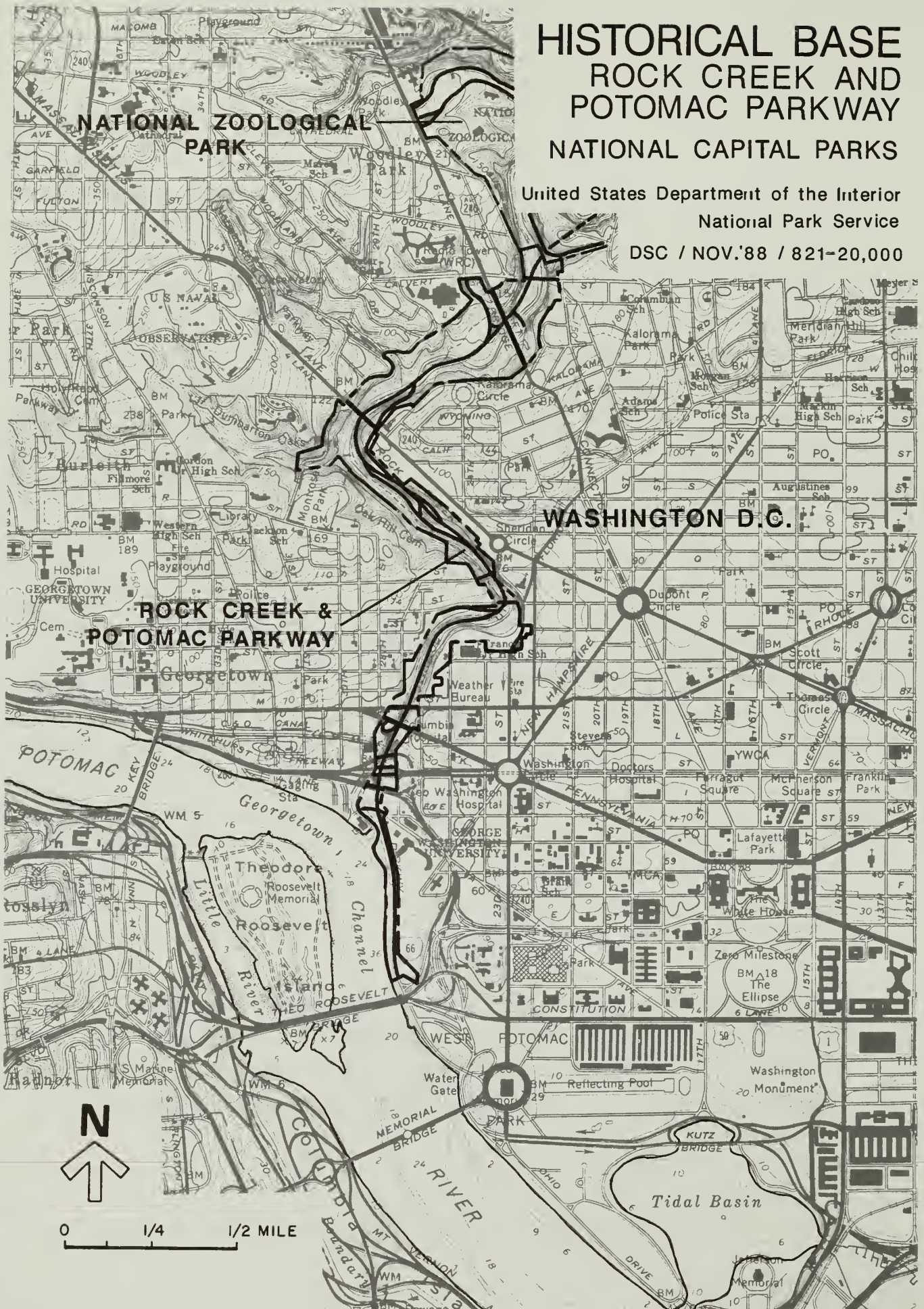
One component of the McMillan Commission report recommended that a parkway be built up the Rock Creek valley connecting the monumental core of Washington, D.C., with Rock Creek Park, the National Zoo, and nearby residential areas. The proposed parkway would eventually connect to the circumferential Fort Circle Drive, linking the Civil War fortifications ringing the district.

1. "Volume Summary for July 1989," Traffic Data Statistics, Denver Service Center, National Park Service.

HISTORICAL BASE ROCK CREEK AND POTOMAC PARKWAY NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DSC / NOV.'88 / 821-20,000



Origins of the idea for a parkway extend back to the Civil War period. The 1916 report of the Parkway Commission notes that Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., while chairman of the Washington Sanitary Commission, became interested during the war in the potential of the Rock Creek valley as a park.² Subsequent talk of filling in the valley prompted activity resulting in studies determining that it should be preserved. During 1913, Congress passed legislation for buying land in the lower valley to build a parkway. The ostensible purpose was to prevent "pollution and obstruction of Rock Creek," and to connect "Potomac Park with the Zoological Park," although 13 years later the purposes expressed included relieving traffic congestion during "rush periods."³

Land acquisition for the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway started in the 1910s, and the construction of some segments began in the 1920s. Constrained by a twisting watercourse, sharply rising embankments, and periodic flooding, the construction was difficult. Nevertheless, it opened in 1935. The route has become a favored one for district commuters and, to the consternation of park managers, its volume of traffic has mushroomed ever since.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway merits inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places as nationally significant under criterion (C) landscape architecture. At the turn of this century Samuel Parsons, Jr., examined the feasibility of linking the Potomac Valley and the zoo with a roadway, and recommended such. The 1902 McMillan Commission Report reinforced the concept and called for a parkway in the valley. The plan was endorsed in 1908, and Congress drew up legislation in 1913. The law, which was signed by President William Howard Taft, specified \$1.3 million for land acquisition and a parkway commission to oversee the work.

As with Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, several federal agencies shared responsibilities for the parkway: the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Commission, the Bureau of Public Roads, and the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds (under the Corps of Engineers). The Fine Arts Commission acted in an advisory capacity. James G. Langdon was appointed designer for the Corps. By early 1916, a report had been submitted to the House of Representatives laying out the details of the parkway. This report had the approval of the Fine Arts Commission, especially its landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. Langdon did most of the design work under oversight of the Fine Arts

2. U.S. Congress, House, *Report of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Commission: 1916*. H. Rept. No. 1114, 64th Cong., 1st sess., 1916, p. 5. Hereafter referred to as *Report 1916*.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Commission, in particular, the review of James L. Greenleaf and Olmsted. This took place simultaneously with procurement of the land.

Parkway land acquisition reached 90 percent completion by the end of summer, 1924, and design work continued as road construction began. Olmsted carefully reviewed the plans and in 1925, submitted a report whose major conclusion advocated "fitting" the plan to the ground. Greenleaf proffered the same advice. Both men desired protecting the "natural scenic assets" of Rock Creek valley. Because various snags in acquiring land slowed the effort, management had to institute condemnation procedures to push the parkway to conclusion. An especially nagging issue involved commercial development at the mouth of the creek, including the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal works. This issue was eventually resolved as businesses moved out and floods made previous developments too expensive to maintain. In October 1935, the entire parkway opened to traffic, although portions had been used since the late 1920s.

As with the other major parkways of Washington, D.C., the historical significance of Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway is associated with its lengthy planning and design effort. Articulated by the McMillan Plan of 1902, it remained part of an overall network of parkways and roads linking the monumental core of Washington, D.C., with historic and scenic areas of the region.

Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway was significant for other associated reasons as well. Several preservationist advocates spoke in favor of Rock Creek Park with a roadway through it. Frederick Olmsted, Jr. served as principal architect of the McMillan Plan, which sought several parkways: the present George Washington Memorial and the Rock Creek and Potomac. He also reviewed design plans for the parkway in 1916, and wrote a report about the final design in 1925. Careful review by Chairman Charles Moore and James L. Greenleaf of the Commission of Fine Arts also enhanced the preliminary and final parkway design.

A final point of significance for Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway is the fact that it preserves a natural resource in the heart of a major metropolitan area. Instead of developing the valley below the zoo, the proponents of preservation secured it for generations to come. Though it is a multiple-use corridor, now marred by high traffic volume and stream degradation, the parkway remains a remnant of the verdant natural landscape chosen by George Washington for the nation's capital. As an idea expressed by the senior Olmsted in the 1860s, it is an early example of setting aside land with recreational potential by a landscape architect who sought such areas for urban America. It was enhanced by the design efforts of several individuals, including Olmsted's son, while it became a scenic parkway.

Unfortunately, the rush of several lanes of traffic twice each day obscures from the mind and the view of most drivers the fact that they are commuting along a restored valley corridor. The parkway functions as a route from one place to another, but one that traverses a niche of unique landscape with a rich national heritage.

HISTORY OF THE PARKWAY

Physically, Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway is closely tied to Rock Creek Park; they are separated only by the National Zoological Park. Technically, the parkway, though associated with the park, came about later and through different circumstances. Rock Creek Park encompasses some 2,000 acres set aside in 1890, although efforts to establish the park began in 1866.⁴ During the 1890s, studies by the District Engineer's office examined the feasibility of filling in lower Rock Creek valley to cover sewage and refuse, but recommended against it. In 1900, Congress authorized monies for a study by a landscape architect to inquire about "a suitable connection between the Potomac and the Zoological parks."⁵ The resulting report by Samuel Parsons, Jr., recommended building a road in the valley from N Street north. The McMillan Commission Report of 1902 did not reflect anything from Parsons, but cast the degraded valley in very negative terms and urged that it be made into a parkway:

The Massachusetts Avenue crossing over Rock Creek has been designed and is under construction as a culvert and fill upon the assumption that the first plan [filled valley] will be carried out, but although this fill will interfere with the perfect execution of the open-valley plan, we feel compelled to recommend the definite adoption of the latter on the grounds of economy, convenience, and beauty. We may point out, however, that the park drives and paths under the open-valley plan would be separated by grade from conflict with the commercial traffic of a busy district. The sights of the inland region between Pennsylvania Avenue and Q Street are for the most part merely shabby, sordid, and disagreeable. It is, therefore, a very fortunate opportunity that permits the seclusion of the parkway in a valley the immediate sides of which can be controlled and can be made to limit the view to a self-contained landscape, which may be beautiful, even though restricted.⁶

At the behest of Congress, Maj. Jay J. Morrow and Capt. E.M. Markham prepared a report in 1908 examining various treatments for the Rock Creek valley. Their basic premise revolved around some

4. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Barry Mackintosh, *Rock Creek Park: An Administrative History*. Washington, D.C.: History Division, 1985. (Hereafter cited, Mackintosh, *Rock Creek Park*). This is the standard reference work on Rock Creek Park and should be consulted for detail on its origins and establishment.

5. Ibid., pp. 47-48.

6. *Report 1916*, p. 8.

type of parkway rather than a conduit for drainage.⁷ They "favored the fully open valley, with a main drive along the creek and bordering roadways above on each side so the backs of buildings would not present themselves to view from within the park."⁸

Between 1911 and 1913, other attempts to establish a parkway along Rock Creek occurred, culminating in March 1913. President William Howard Taft signed legislation "for the purpose of preventing the pollution and obstruction of Rock Creek and of connecting Potomac Park with the Zoological Park and Rock Creek Park."⁹ The legislation authorized \$1.3 million for acquiring land and set up the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Commission (William G. McAdoo, Lindley M. Garrison, and D.F. Houston) which, in turn, appointed Col. William W. Harts, U. S. Army, as executive officer.

Harts, a native of Illinois and graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, held responsibility as officer-in-charge of public buildings and grounds. His staff included James G. Langdon, a landscape architect formerly employed by the Charlottesville & Albemarle Railway Company. Langdon's official appointment was to the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds on April 1, 1915, and officially to the parkway commission October 1, 1915, as "expert landscape architectural designer."¹⁰ For a salary of \$3,600 per year, Langdon began an exact boundary survey of the lands needed for the new parkway before completing a detailed map of these lands.

The Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Commission completed much work in a short time and presented its report to the House of Representatives on February 17, 1916, after first securing approval from the Fine Arts Commission and its landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. As noted in the letter of transmittal, the Parkway Commission reduced the properties taken by 1,875,763 square feet (43 acres) and addressed the knotty issues of acquiring land owned by the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal Company and the Washington Gas Light Company.¹¹ It urged the release of the \$1.3 million to acquire land because land values and development continued to increase. The report contained a section-by-section discussion of features and issues.

7. Mackintosh, *Rock Creek Park*, pp. 50-51.

8. Ibid.

9. U.S. Congress, House, *To Enable the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Commission . . . to Make Slight Changes in the Boundaries of Said Parkway by Excluding Therefrom and Selling Certain Small Areas, and Including Other Limited Areas, the Net Cost not to Exceed the Total Sum Already Authorized for the Entire Project*. H. Rept. No. 2210, 70th Cong., 2d sess., 1929, passim. Hereafter referred to as H. Rept. No. 2210.

10. Randolph to Langdon, August 9, 1915; Office of Public Buildings and Grounds to Chief of Engineers, September 28, 1921, National Archives, Record Group 77, Box 2361.

11. *Report 1916*, p. 6.

Holdings of large business interests dominated the report, and various avenues for agreements with these businesses received attention from the commission. The C&O Canal Company agreed to give up land on the lower parkway in exchange for title to lands outside the boundary and a rerouting of the canal away from the creek. These issues continued unresolved for several years until 1924 when a large flood solved the problem by making the canal too costly to repair. On the other hand, the Gas Light Company willingly agreed to exchange land on the east side of the lower creek in 1917.¹²

Much of the commission's 1916 report reinforces the argument for having a parkway in the Rock Creek valley in the first place. Commission members noted special features of each valley section that would enhance such a roadway and pointed out detriments of particular bridge structures or areas where "dumping of refuse on the creek banks. . . present[s] a sordid and undesirable appearance."¹³ During the next 8 years, the purchase of land proceeded and, by late summer 1924 about 90 percent had been acquired. Many parcels had to be condemned to gain title while land values continued to rise during the bargaining and subsequent court actions. As government ownership developed, portions between L and P streets were cleaned of "promiscuous dumping, . . . especially on the east side, . . . of most unsightly rubbish, . . . and slopes . . . overgrown with tangles of weeds and small trees."¹⁴ The work progressed rather slowly because of a lack of funds. Through it all, however, visionaries saw beauty coming to the fore in this natural landscape at the center of a growing metropolitan area.

Parkway planning and design were guided by the Commission of Fine Arts, chaired by Charles Moore. Design of the parkway began simultaneously with the acquisition of properties. James L. Langdon completed most of the initial work. Olmsted, Jr., carefully scrutinized the design in his official capacity as member of the Commission of Fine Arts. As land acquisition neared conclusion, design matters came to the fore so that construction might begin. During 1925, there was considerable discussion of design matters – principally by Chairman Moore; James L. Greenleaf, landscape architect with the Fine Arts Commission; Olmsted; and Col. Clarence O. Sherrill, Director of Public Buildings and Public Grounds.

Some changes in the design had been formulated by the mid-20s, and copies had been sent to members and former members of the Fine Arts Commission for comment. Greenleaf immediately responded to Moore about a concern regarding the lower end of the parkway – specifically, placing it under an

12. Mackintosh, *Rock Creek Park: An Administrative History*, pp. 56-57. A complete discussion of resolution to the issues is included in this history.

13. *Report 1916*, p. 17.

14. *Washington Star*, August 17, 1924.

abutment of the Arlington Memorial Bridge. Moore found that alternative unsatisfactory because it eliminated the watergate stairs and a retaining wall treatment, and instead hid the archway with "face walls of the abutment so that it would not show."¹⁵ In a related matter Moore expressed concern about sending the above alternative to former commission member Olmsted, who he said, might "[seize] this alternate [sic] plan. . .considering traffic problems to the exclusion of everything else, and coming to the conclusion that the only proper thing is the shooting of Potomac Parkway under the Memorial Bridge."¹⁶ Olmsted apparently did not "fix upon" this point because in its final recommendations the Fine Arts Commission discarded the alternative and so communicated to Col. Sherrill and to McKim, Mead and White, the architectural firm for the Arlington Memorial Bridge.¹⁷

Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., received an invitation from the commission, through Chairman Moore, to inspect the plans and the project site in September 1925. On September 26, 1925, Olmsted filed a report based on his study of the plans and a four-hour field trip covering the length of the parkway from the Lincoln Memorial to the Zoological Park. His first major concern was the commercial development at the mouth of Rock Creek, in particular the C & O Canal facilities and the Columbia Granite and Dredging Company operations, which obscured a user's view of the Potomac River and the Virginia shore.¹⁸ Likewise, a northbound or southbound user could not observe the transition from a broad river valley "to the sylvan scenery of the creek valley," because of commercial development. Other specific issues that Olmsted questioned included a border road between I and K streets, road alignments, the bridge location at N Street, and a small bridge at creek level to preserve a pleasant, wooded hillside at Massachusetts Avenue. He closed with the observation that it was a good plan but one "that at many points has the ear marks of having been made mainly in the office, without yet having received that patient, time consuming detailed 'fitting on the ground'."¹⁹ Olmsted said the Commission of Fine Arts should carefully review the plan and make sure that it moved from a general to a specific level to preserve the creek valley for posterity.

The review proceeded into October 1925, and commission member Greenleaf also did an onsite inspection prior to final approval. At the meeting held on October 8, 1925, Olmsted's and Greenleaf's recommendations were approved with an emphasis on fitting on the ground and the exercise of patience

15. Greenleaf to Moore, September 16, 1925, National Archives, Record Group 66, Box 156.

16. Ibid.

17. Chairman of the Fine Arts Commission to Sherrill, October 12, 1925, National Archives, Record Group 66, Box 156.

18. Olmsted to Moore, September 26, 1925, p. 1, National Archives, Record Group 66, Box 156.

19. Ibid, p. 6.

in doing so. Moore endorsed a commission recommendation to Col. Sherrill that entailed putting the revised plan on detailed topographic maps having a scale of 1 inch to 40, feet as had been done with the first plan. In closing, Moore underscored a planning approach demanding a superior effort to protect the "natural scenic assets" of the creek valley. Sherrill replied that the Public Buildings and Public Parks staff already had begun to restudy the design "on the ground" and had found several points where adjustments would reinforce the recommendations of the commission.²⁰

Work commenced on the parkway during the 1920s, but reluctant sellers hampered the construction of a systematic and continuous roadway through the valley. Contentions over boundary lines and the difficulty of acquiring right-of-way dragged out the construction for a decade. Several engineering problems developed regarding properly bridging the creek while remaining sensitive to the setting. Other design matters were resolved through acts as diverse as floods, the unsightly appearances of some bridges, and public opinion. Washingtonians regularly expressed opinions about the design and construction of the parkway as work proceeded toward completion in 1935.

As work on the parkway progressed, the need for an extension of the road through the National Zoological Park to Rock Creek Park became more apparent. However, the Smithsonian Institution, which had jurisdiction over the zoo, became concerned about the impact such action would have on its facilities. An initial proposal involved "a tunnel directly through the hill on which the lion house and other buildings stand," but zoo managers deemed it unacceptable until the proposal could be examined more fully.²¹

During the mid-1930s, the Bureau of Public Roads made preliminary studies for locating routes in tunnels through zoo property. Of the two possible routes identified, the longer, estimated at \$950,000, required new road construction near Klinge Valley. The shorter route necessitated a tunnel only under the zoo administration building and had a price tag of \$665,000, nearly half for the tunnel proper.²² By 1939, the price had risen to \$1.15 million, and the preferred route lay under the zoo director's home and office. Coolness or outright opposition to the idea emanated from officials of the Smithsonian and the zoo, and from the National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Associate Director Arthur E. Demaray of the Park Service, however, sought funding and a land base for the project and spoke of

20. Sherrill to Moore, October 23, 1925, National Archives, Record Group 66, Box 156.

21. Acting Secretary (Smithsonian Institution) to Cammerer, September 14, 1933, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2835.

22. Demaray to Burlew, March 6, 1937, National Archives, Record Group 328.

Congressional support for such a route.²³ Delayed by World War II, the effort lay dormant until 1954, when the commission and the Park Service began advocating it once more. After a successful effort to convince Smithsonian officials, plans were approved in 1960, and the tunnel under Administration Hill became a reality in 1966.²⁴

When the parkway opened, it was supported by most residents of Washington, D.C.; however, concerns over traffic arose almost immediately. Chairman Frederick A. Delano of the NCP & PC wrote the Director of the Park Service about their concern and recommended "one-way routes at night northbound, and in the daytime, southbound."²⁵ He suggested that certain routes be "permanently northbound or permanently southbound routes." Delano went on to advise posting speed limits early to develop "good habits" promptly, "after all, driving in the park is intended to be pleasure driving, and we do not want to encourage speeding."²⁶ The reply, which came two days later, confirmed that National Park Service Director Arno Cammerer had anticipated such problems, and speed limits were posted for "22 miles an hour through to P Street," and from there south, 30 miles an hour.²⁷ The one-way traffic patterns in effect today were not implemented until 1937.

Attractive to those employed in the city, the parkway soon became a major route of travel to and from work. As a result volume mushroomed, and a parkway became more and more just another road, albeit a pleasant one.

Another demand on park management consisted of pressure to construct pedestrian foot trails along the parkway corridor. A landslide prompted the first such trail from P Street to 23d Street connecting with Massachusetts Avenue. Outside pressure for trails also resulted when "as many as 2,000 automobiles" an hour used the low-level bridge at P Street discouraging walkers from taking that route.²⁸ Superintendent C. Marshall Finnan, feeling pressure from a large number of people, "many of

23. Demaray to Burlew, November 7, 1939, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2835.

24. Mackintosh, *Rock Creek Park*, pp. 82-84.

25. Delano to Cammerer, June 6, 1936, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2835.

26. Ibid.

27. Cammerer to Delano, June 8, 1936, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2835.

28. Finnan to Director, June 15, 1936, National Archives, Record Group 328.

considerable influence," advocated that the trails be extended to Georgetown, Massachusetts Avenue, and into Rock Creek Park.²⁹

During the 1920s and 1930s the public brought up the purpose of Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway much as it does today. Initially, proponents sought to preserve Rock Creek valley from desecration as a dump or an area filled with material on which development would eventually take place (see the next section on "Legislation"). Not long after the opening of the road, residents began exclaiming that traffic volume had risen to an unacceptable level. One critic, Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes, summed it up thus: "Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway have become main traffic arteries so that their preservation for park use and enjoyment is becoming increasingly difficult. Certain interests now propose to add bus traffic on these roads further to interfere with the intended use of the area."³⁰ He advocated that "greater relative importance" be given to visitor access to the memorials than to solving traffic problems.

In a larger context, Ickes expressed grave misgivings about the growth of the Washington area and the concomitant "disposition to encroach upon our already inadequate park areas for non-park purposes."³¹ He advocated more rather than less park area for the population boom predicted for the nation's capital: "Expediency and cost should be subordinated to the broader conceptions of the appearance of our Capital City and the legitimate needs of its citizens."³²

Ickes counsel notwithstanding, efforts were already underway to construct a four-lane highway north through the Rock Creek valley into rural Maryland. This scheme had the backing of Commissioner Melvin C. Hazen of the District of Columbia, also an advocate of the tunnel project. The road acceded to the demands of commuters for an "express thoroughfare" along the parkway-zoo-park route and beyond. Thomas C. Jeffers expressed his doubts about portions near Klinge Road and Broad Branch Road to Henry V. Hubbard of the Olmsted Brothers firm, and asked for comments before a meeting of the planning commission set for mid-August.³³ Hubbard sent a letter to Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., expressing his observations about the encroachment on recreational and park facilities. Even if future

29. Ibid.

30. Harold L. Ickes, "Warning Against Further Encroachment Upon The Parks And Playgrounds Of The National Capital," October 17, 1941, p. 2, National Archives, Record Group 328. Statement made to a meeting of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid., p. 5.

33. Jeffers to Hubbard, July 29, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328.

traffic could be reduced by moving government functions from the heart of Washington to outlying areas or even to other parts of the country, Hubbard expressed, "[a] speedway," once in place, meant "the park is gone."³⁴

Olmsted took an open position on the proposal. Rather than obstructing it and risking that "an unwise express route would be bulled through," he said that instead, we should "fight for time and for opportunity to make a really thorough investigation and presentation of the alternative possible plans."³⁵ Time became an ally during World War II, and planning proceeded at a deliberate pace as outlined by the National Park Service, Corps of Engineers, and the NCP & PC. Detailed surveys and plans became essential, and the planning commission accepted them at its September 1942 meeting. At that meeting Harland Bartholomew, consultant to the commission for many years, advised that a similar "express highway was built through St. Louis park, and we have come to think if we had to do it over again, we would not put it in that location."³⁶ The highway in St. Louis had caused people to move to the suburbs, increasing traffic through the park – a lesson to be heeded.

The expressway idea gained momentum during the 1950s, but came to a timely end 10 years later with the advent of the rapid transit rail system. (For a more complete discussion, see Mackintosh, *Rock Creek Park: An Administrative History*, pp. 85-89.)

In summary, the lower Rock Creek valley was reclaimed from the depredations of an urban population and restored in a way consistent with well-understood principles of landscape design. Access to the valley came in the form of a parkway used to provide a recreational experience for drivers, though it found secondary use as a commuter way for many workers. Eventually, the commuter traffic eclipsed the use initially intended for the parkway. Demands for increasing traffic loads continue to this day. With the help of several nationally known landscape architects, the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway has provided residents and visitors alike with an appealing experience while preserving a unique natural setting in the heart of a major metropolitan area.

34. Hubbard to Olmsted, July 31, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328.

35. Olmsted to Hubbard, August 5, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328.

36. Minutes of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, September 17-18, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328.

Legislation

In 1913, Congress created the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Commission for the purpose of acquiring lands along both sides of Rock Creek on which to build a 4-mile-long parkway connecting West Potomac Park and Rock Creek Park. The commission consisted of the secretaries of agriculture, war, and the treasury. Under their stewardship, land acquisition was to proceed by virtue of "purchase, condemnation, or otherwise." Congress authorized an expenditure of \$1.3 million for land acquisition, an amount raised through annual incremental appropriations ranging from \$50,000 to \$250,000 between 1916 and 1925. The cost of acquiring the tracts was to be borne equally by the federal government and the government of the District of Columbia.³⁷

The stated purpose of Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway was twofold. The legislation establishing the commission in 1913 specified that the parkway was to be built "for the purpose of preventing the pollution and obstruction of Rock Creek and of connecting Potomac Park with the Zoological Park and Rock Creek Park" ³⁸ Accordingly, the project would preserve "an area of about 162 acres which has for years been an unsightly ravine – a place for throwing refuse" ³⁹

An additional document written 12 years later when traffic volume began a significant increase stated another purpose of the parkway was the creation of

a roadway . . . by which it is believed that congested traffic conditions on north and south streets during the rush periods of morning and evening will be greatly alleviated, inasmuch as the new traffic artery . . . will avoid practically altogether crossing of other highways on grade.⁴⁰

37. U.S., *Statutes at Large*, XXXVII, 885; U.S. Congress, Senate, *The Acquisition of Land for the Parkway between Rock Creek Park, the Zoological Park, and Potomac Park*. S. Rept. No. 353, 69 Cong., 1st sess., 1926, pp. 1-2; U.S., *Statutes at Large*, XLIII, 574, 1323. Funds for surveying the parkway were authorized in an appropriation of March 3, 1915, for sundry government expenses. U.S., *Statutes at Large*, XXXVIII, 829. For other fiscal discourse relating to land acquisition, see U.S. Congress, Senate, *Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Appropriations . . . on H.R. 11, A Bill Making Appropriations for Sundry Civil Expenses of the Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1911*, 65th Cong., 1st sess., 1918, pp. 9-10, 84-85; U.S. Congress, House, *District of Columbia Appropriations Bill*, 1925, 68th Cong., 1st sess., 1924, pp. 494-498.

38. U.S. Congress, House, *To Enable the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Commission . . . to Make Slight Changes in the Boundaries of Said Parkway by Excluding Therefrom and Selling Certain Small Areas, and Including Other Limited Areas, the Net Cost not to Exceed the Total Sum Already Authorized for the Entire Project*. H. Rept. No. 2210, 70th Cong., 2d sess., 1929, passim.

39. H.P. Caemmerer, *Washington, the National Capital* (Government Printing Office, 1932), p. 101.

40. Sen. Rept. No. 353, p. 2.

In early 1926, the commission reported that \$600,000 beyond the originally authorized \$1.3 million was needed to complete land acquisition, owing largely to the increase in land values after 1913, particularly in the area bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue, M Street, and Rock Creek. Over the strongly expressed views of a minority that did not want District of Columbia funds used, Congress passed H.R. 4785, which allocated the required funds.⁴¹ Further financing came with appropriations in 1928, "for continuing the acquisition of lands" for the route.⁴² In 1929, provision was made for selling certain other parcels of land previously obtained and using the proceeds to purchase tracts that one day might threaten the protection of Rock Creek valley.⁴³ Specifically, the latter measure ensured against acquisition of lands deemed unnecessary for the parkway as of 1929, and conversely, allowed for the purchase of lands now required but not so specified in the 1913 act delineating the commission's responsibilities.⁴⁴

Design

Scattered references pertaining to design exist for Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway just as for the other parkways included in this study. Based on experiences with Mount Vernon Memorial Highway and Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, the Bureau of Public Roads set forth several design principles for parkways in the 1930s (see Appendix A). The recommendations addressed alignment, grade crossings, right-of-way, divided roadways, aesthetic qualities, topographical considerations, turnout areas, and access.⁴⁵

41. Ibid., passim; U.S. Congress, House, *Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Commission*. H. Doc. No. 375, 69th Cong., 1st sess., 1926, passim; U.S. Congress, House, *Acquisition of Land to Connect the Parkway between Rock Creek Park, Zoological Park, and Potomac Park*. H. Rept. No. 52, Pt. 2, 69th Cong., 1st sess., 1926, passim; U.S. Congress, Senate, *To Enable the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Commission to Complete the Acquisition of Land for the Parkway between Rock Creek Park, the Zoological Park, and Potomac Park*. S. Rept. No. 152, 69th Cong., 1st sess., 1926, passim; U.S., *Statutes at Large*, XLIV, 396-397, 849. In January, 1927, Congress allowed the sale of a small tract of the previously acquired land for construction of a church building and driveway. Ibid., pp. 1007-1008; U.S. Congress, House, *Authorizing Sale of Land at Margin of Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway*. H. Rept. No. 1748, 69th Cong., 2d sess., 1927, passim.

42. U.S., *Statutes at Large*, XLV, 679-680.

43. U.S. Congress, Senate, *Authorizing Slight Changes in Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, without Increase of Cost*. S. Rept. No. 1580, 70th Cong., 2d sess., 1929, pp. 1-2.

44. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, Hearings on H.R. 16209, *A Bill to Enable the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Commission, Established by Act of March 4, 1913, to Make Slight Changes in the Boundaries of Said Parkway by Excluding Therefrom and Selling Certain Small Areas, and Including Other Limited Areas, the Net Cost Not to Exceed the Total Sum Already Authorized for the Entire Project*. 70th Cong., 2d sess., 1929, pp. 17, 19. Attempts to provide the commission with discretionary power in making land selections had begun as early as 1914, when Secretary of the Treasury (and Commission Chairman) William G. McAdoo introduced a resolution empowering the commission "to exclude lands not needed and to include lands needed. . . ." U.S. Congress, House, *Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, submitting Resolution Relative to the Acquirement of Land and Premises along Rock Creek for the Purpose of connecting Potomac Park with the Zoological Park and Rock Creek Park, as Authorized by Act of Congress approved March 4, 1913*. 63d Cong., 2d sess., 1914, p. 3.

45. *Washington Star*, June 5, 1938, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

Landscaping of the parkway became a top priority for Park Superintendent Finnan of National Capital Parks. He wrote that money spent should be sufficient to do the job properly because: "slope treatment and landscaping [are] vitally necessary to the success of the project. Our own office will reserve funds sufficient to make some progress with the planning and landscaping of the highcut slopes."⁴⁶ In the same correspondence, Finnan set forth paving requirements:

Base: A 10-inch macadam base in two courses about 6-1/2 and 3-1/2 inches thick for base and top courses, respectively, each course to be separately rolled and bound, the bottom course to be bound either with cinders or screenings, and the top course with screenings and asphalt penetration.

Wearing Surface: The wearing surface to be of the bituminous concrete wearing surface, in two courses, which has already been extensively applied on the Arlington Memorial Bridge project and in the National Capital Parks.

Curbs and Gutters: Curbs and gutters to be the standard concrete type used in the Parks, and thoroughly reinforced longitudinally, with construction joints about every 40 feet.⁴⁷

Shortly after the parkway opened, several nearby locations experienced traffic jams associated with the new route. One of these locales was the junction of K Street and the parkway, an at-grade crossing, which accommodated nearly 3,000 vehicles between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m.⁴⁸ Finnan underscored the need for a grade separation at the location, although he also noted the need to coordinate with the "contemplated vehicular elevated drive which would continue on over 'K' Street through Georgetown and connect with the Key Bridge [Whitehurst Expressway]."

Bureau of Public Roads (present Federal Highway Administration) documents shed information on design and materials for bridges constructed over Rock Creek during the 1930s (see Appendixes B through J). The J.A. LaPorte Construction Company of New York City built the low-level bridge at 22d and P Street in 1936.

All stone masonry for the project was placed by Louis Perna and Sons., Incorporated of Washington D.C. to whom this part of the contract was sublet by the general contractor. Stone for Stone Facing and Parapets was obtained from the Stoneyhurst Quarry near Cabin John, Md. and granite Dimensioned Masonry was obtained from the H.E. Fletcher Co., West Chelmsford, Mass. where it was cut to the required dimensions before shipment. The sample wall for stone facing masonry was set up on Oct. 21st. under supervision of Mr. A.C. Gutteresen, of the Park Service and approved by him.

46. Finnan to Gotwals, July 26, 1934, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2835.

47. Ibid.

48. Finnan to Tolson, June 23, 1935, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2835.

All operations in connection with the placing of stone masonry, and the cutting of the stones for stone facing and parapets, was done by hand and hand operated hoists. All stone masonry was cut and placed by expert masons, the stones being carefully selected as to size, color, and durability.⁴⁹

Grading and construction of retaining walls to stabilize a slide area took place near Q Street and the parkway during 1936. A section some 300 feet long slid onto the road above the Q Street bridge necessitating replacing and redesigning an old stone-faced concrete retaining wall some 15 to 18 feet high. The "grade of the roadway" was raised 6 feet and a new retaining wall was built from the materials noted above. "Care was exercised to obtain the various coloring[s] of buff and gray in the exposed surfaces of stone masonry."⁵⁰ "Coping stones for the retaining walls . . . were also made from the Stoneyhurst product, they being cut to proper thickness and each piece to full width of the wall."⁵¹ Bureau of Public Roads day labor shored up the slide area above the retaining wall. "A substantial crib of locust logs [was] placed on the face of the slide and well anchored into the fill with additional logs. The crib work was carried up on a 1:1 slope for the length of slide to within a short distance of the top of the embankment."⁵² Workers placed 4 inches of "loamy topsoil" on top and seeded it with "Kentucky Bluegrass, Red Top, and European Red Fescue."⁵³

Late in 1938, contractors completed another low-level bridge over Rock Creek just west of the Taft Bridge over Connecticut Avenue, and also a retaining wall nearby. The new bridge replaced "an old steel truss structure known as Military Bridge."⁵⁴ In the final construction report, the structure is described as "one rigid framed reinforced concrete arch, with concrete abutments and wingwalls and a 76 foot retaining wall, all stone faced."⁵⁵ The structure measured 44 feet across, curb to curb, with a 4-foot sidewalk on either side. The arch span measured 78 feet. Albert D. Batista of Washington,

49. *Final Construction Report Project 3B1, National Capital Parks Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, Bridge Over Rock Creek Near 22d. and P Sts. N.W. Washington, D.C.* May 1936, p. 4. Federal Highway Administration Files, Arlington, Virginia.

50. *Final Construction Report National Capital Parks Project 3B4, Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, Washington, D.C., Reconstruction of Parkway Near "Q" Street*, April 10, 1937, pp. 4,6. Federal Highway Administration Files, Arlington, Virginia.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

54. *Final Construction Report National Capital Parks, Project 3B4, Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, Washington, D.C., Bridge Over Rock Creek Near Shoreham Hotel*, November 2, 1938, p. 3, Federal Highway Administration Files, Arlington, Virginia.

55. *Ibid.*

D.C., did the stone facing and parapet masonry using stone obtained from his quarry and the Stoneyhurst quarry.⁵⁶ A description of the stone notes "it consists of a durable quality of mica schist with a pleasing variety of blue-gray and buff coloring, while the copings, arch ringstones, abutment faces and corner quoins are of gray granite, as are also the battered slopes of the exposed portions of the wingwalls."⁵⁷ Granite came from the Frank Peach quarries at Granite, Maryland, where it was cut to dimension before shipping. Associate Highway Engineer C.L. Tarwater especially commended the stone work throughout the project.

Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, opened in 1935, thus became the first such road established through a park in the District of Columbia. It preserved for future generations a valley that had been destroyed and subsequently restored, and made it attractive for a variety of users and uses. Many prominent individuals contributed to the planning and design of the road and persevered despite difficulties with budgets, land acquisition, and different opinions on the design of the parkway. Along with the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway portion of George Washington Memorial Parkway, Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway became another lesson in the evolution of design principles used by the federal government on parkways.

56. Ibid., p. 5.

57. Ibid.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Parkway Design Recommendations of Bureau of Public Roads

The Bureau of Public Roads made recommendations through the years about parkway design:

1. Provide streamlined continuity in alignment. (Long, easy curves with transition curves or spirals to connect them with tangents.) No "flat wheels"--in other words, no tangents between curves in the same direction.
2. Elimination of grade crossings, railway or highway, at important intersecting thoroughfares, with access provisions.
3. Protected right of way control each side of the driveway (buffer) 200 feet average width, with a minimum of not less than 150 feet, eliminates slum conditions and hazards along the roadsides.
4. Wherever possible, flow of traffic should be so planned that at no place would it cross itself on entering or leaving. Traffic should enter and leave on the right hand (slow side), passing always (where practicable) above or beneath when coming from, or going to, the left.
5. Where feasible and economically justified by the volume of traffic, motor vehicles should not be permitted to travel in opposite directions on the same surface. For reasons of safety parkways preferably should have divided roadways for one-way traffic.
6. Parkways should be designed so as to incorporate beauty as well as efficiency. Consideration should be given to the appearance of all surface features. All structures should be designed in good proportion and with pleasing outlines. The incidental features of the roadside should be designed and located along the highway with respect to adjacent features so as to harmonize the construction with the surroundings.
7. The collaboration of landscape architect and engineer should be fundamental from the start of the planning to coordinate the design and construction of the various units of the work to fit present needs and future possible demands in an attractive manner. The width and form of the right of way reservation is

governed by the local conditions and the topography. The conservation and preservation of natural scenery should be carefully considered.

8. The traffic lanes should be designed for the movement of traffic without interruption to travel by the parking of vehicles upon them. Space off the traveled way should be provided for the public safety and convenience together with any incidental service such as parking spaces, picnicking areas, overlooks, tables, benches, fire places, comfort facilities, etc.

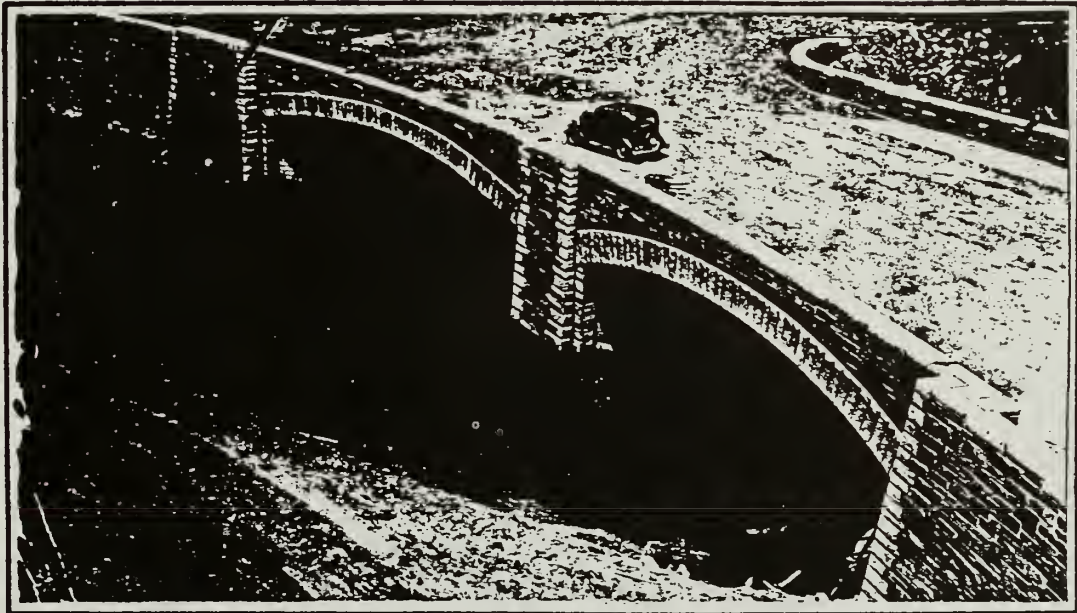
9. A limited number of well-distributed entry points should be provided as a means for gaining access to adjoining districts or to the highway by the more or less local traffic that the highway serves. The buffer strips of land along each side of the roadway preclude any interference with the primary purpose of the parkway to provide rapid transportation service between main points. The protected right of way insures the investment of the public from the usual depreciating effect on heretofore initial highway values caused by the gradual but continuous entry of sporadic form of ribbon-like development strung out as so-called improvements along many of our important highways. Without this positive and definite land control, the once reasonably efficient and sometimes attractive highway becomes lined with disfigurements of the roadside, defeating the very purpose that the traffic artery was intended to serve.

APPENDIX B

FINAL CONSTRUCTION REPORT
PROJECT NO. 3BI

NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS

ROCK CREEK AND POTOMAC PARKWAY



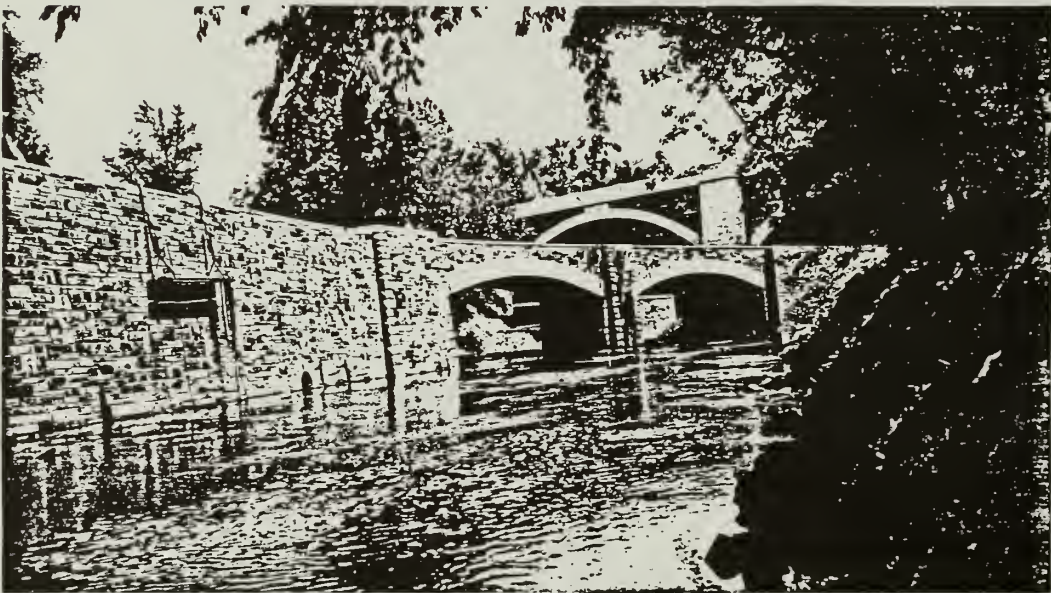
BRIDGE OVER ROCK CREEK

NEAR 22ND. AND P STS. N.W.
WASHINGTON, D. C.

APPENDIX C



West Side of Bridge.
Contrast in Coloring of Stone
Facing May be Noted.



Looking Downstream at West Side.
Retaining Wall to Left.
P St. Bridge in Background.

APPENDIX D

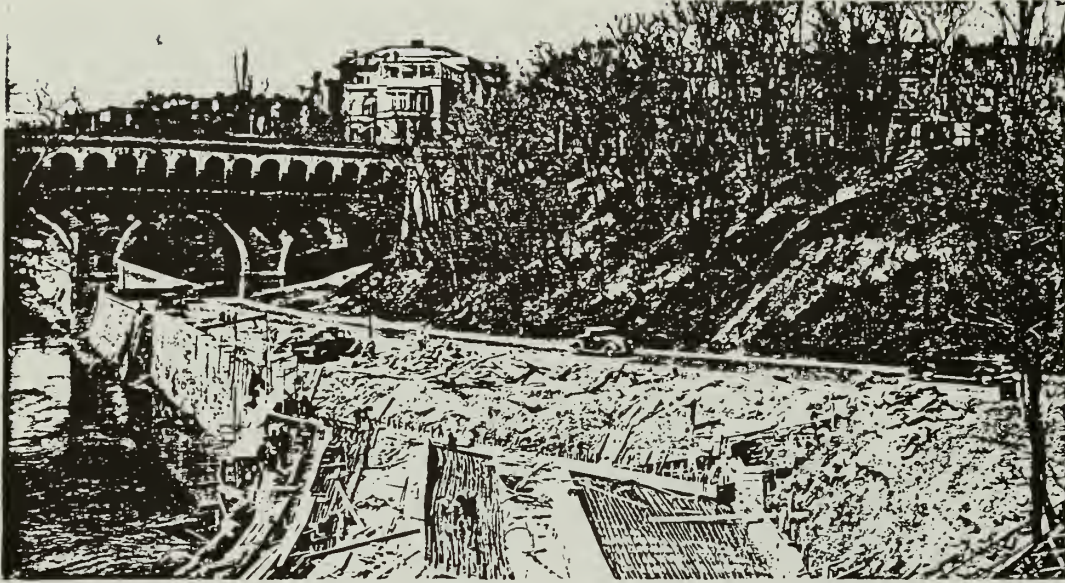


East Side of Bridge.
Riprap Around S.E. Wingwall.
Q St. Bridge in Background.

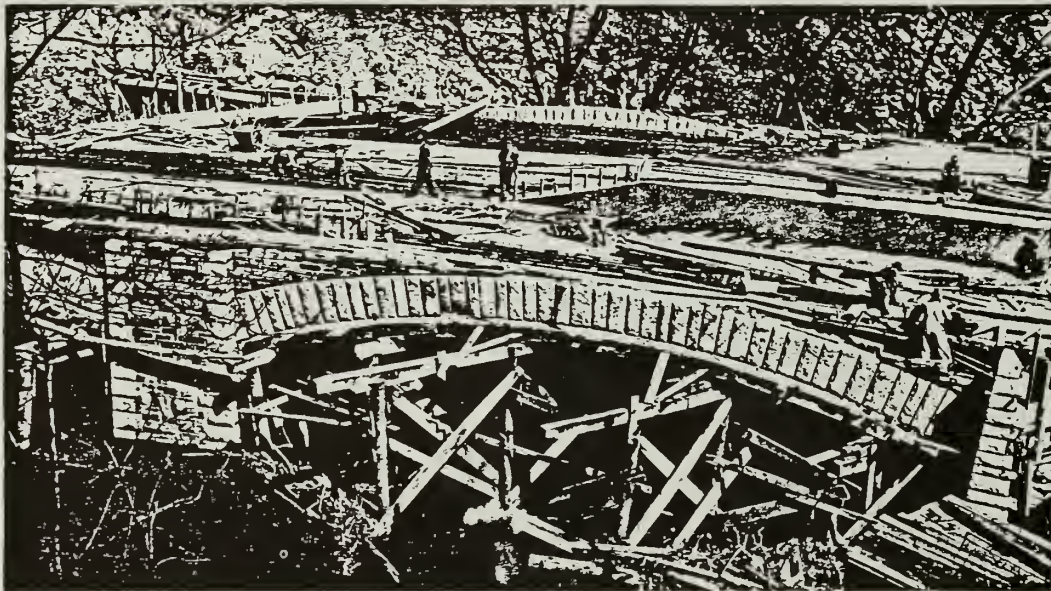


East Side of Bridge.
Note Effect Beneath Arches of Superelevation
of Roadway.

APPENDIX E

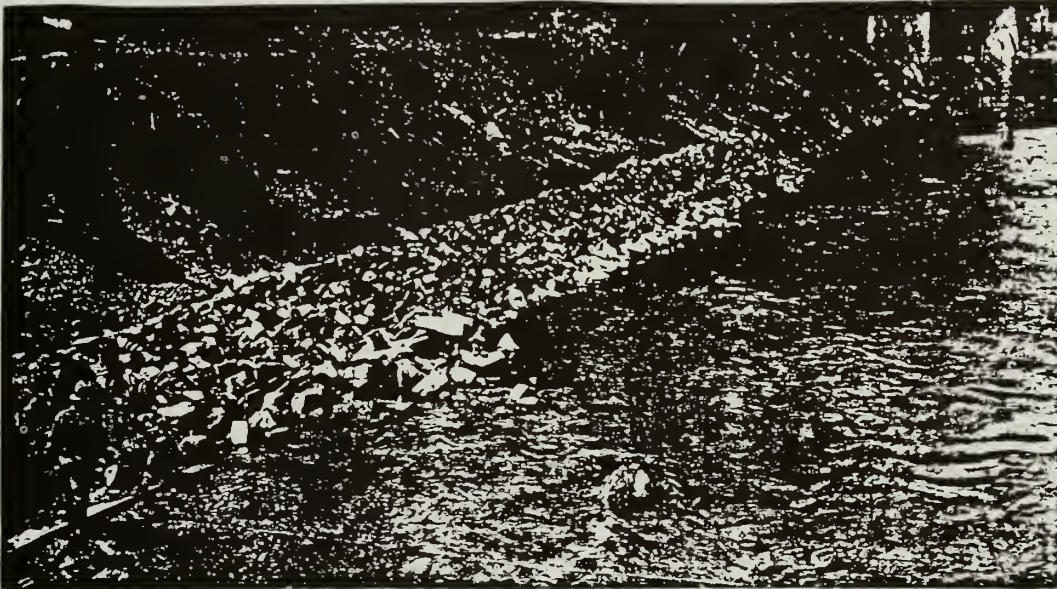


North Approach.
Pouring North Arch, Showing
Longitudinal Sections.
Q St. Bridge in Background.

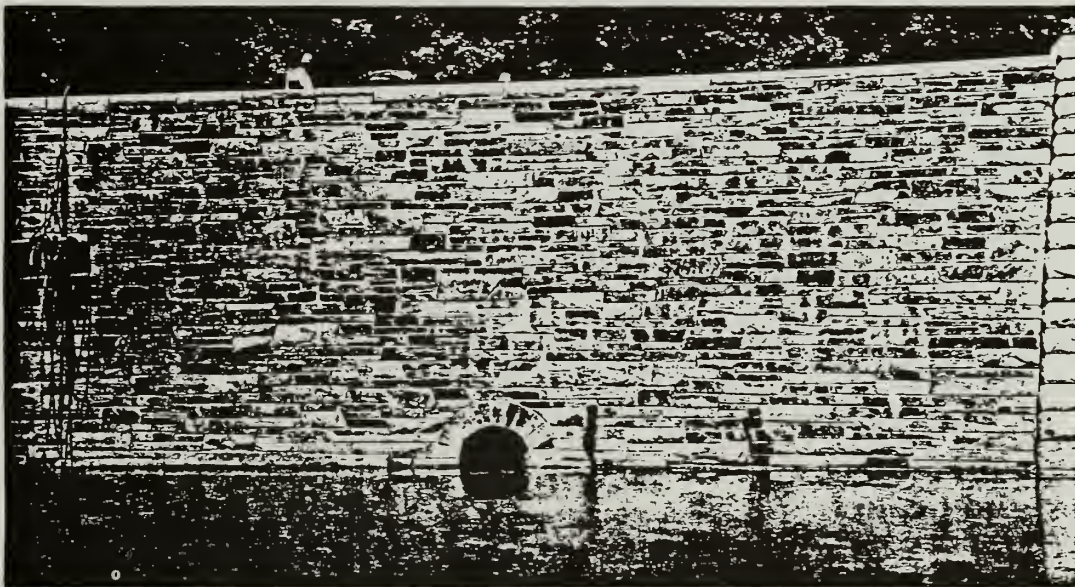


West Side of South Arch.
Granite Ringstones in Place Ready
for Pouring of Arch Sections.

APPENDIX F



N.W.Retaining Wall.
Showing Stone Facing and Grabite.
Opening at Water Line is Outlet for
36 inch Storm Sewer.

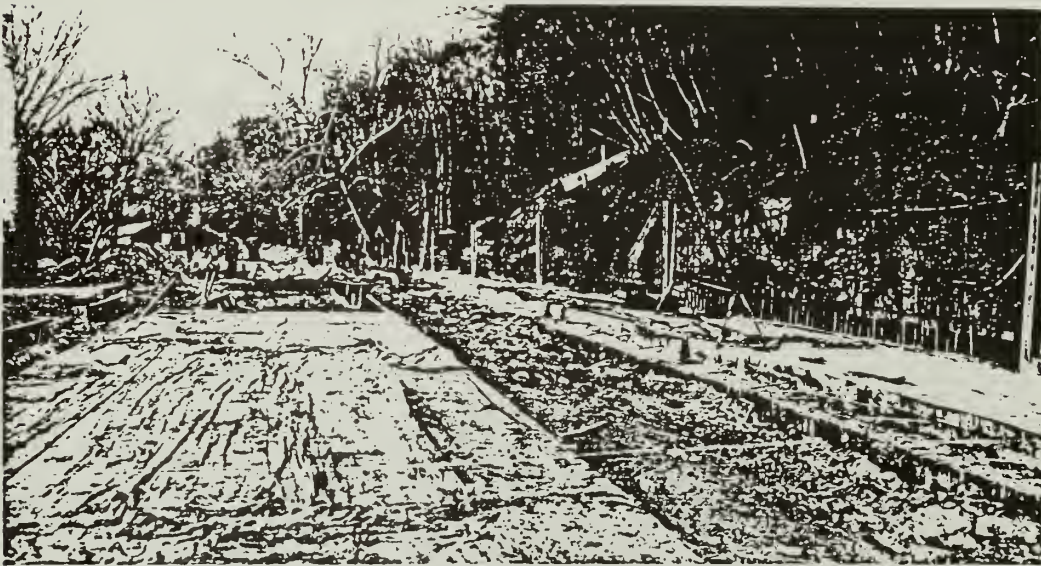


Riprap Wall.
Upstream from S.W.Wingwall.

APPENDIX G



Placing Stone Facing for New Retaining Wall.

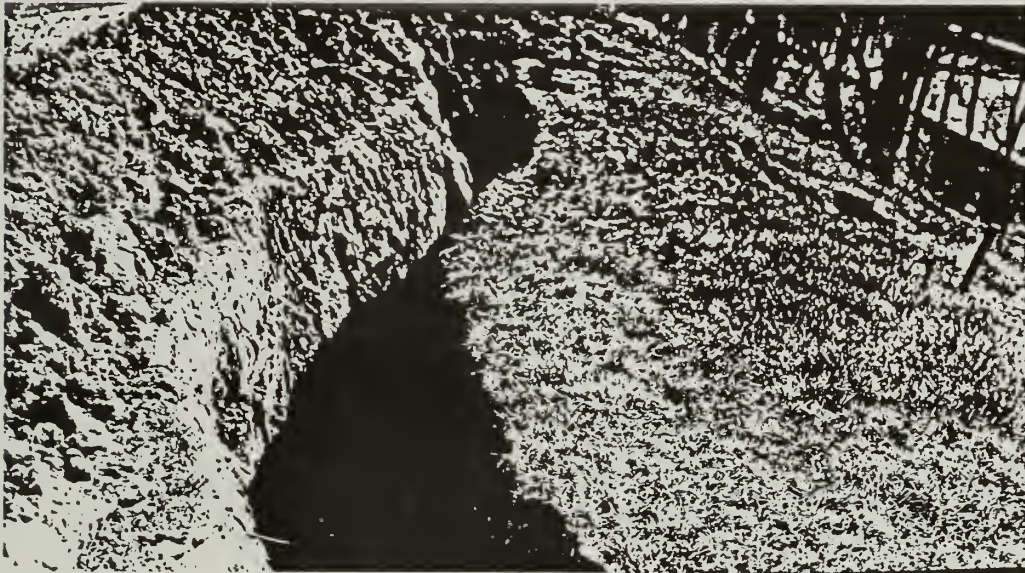


Footing of New Retaining Wall on Right, and one lane of Concrete Base for Roadway.

APPENDIX H

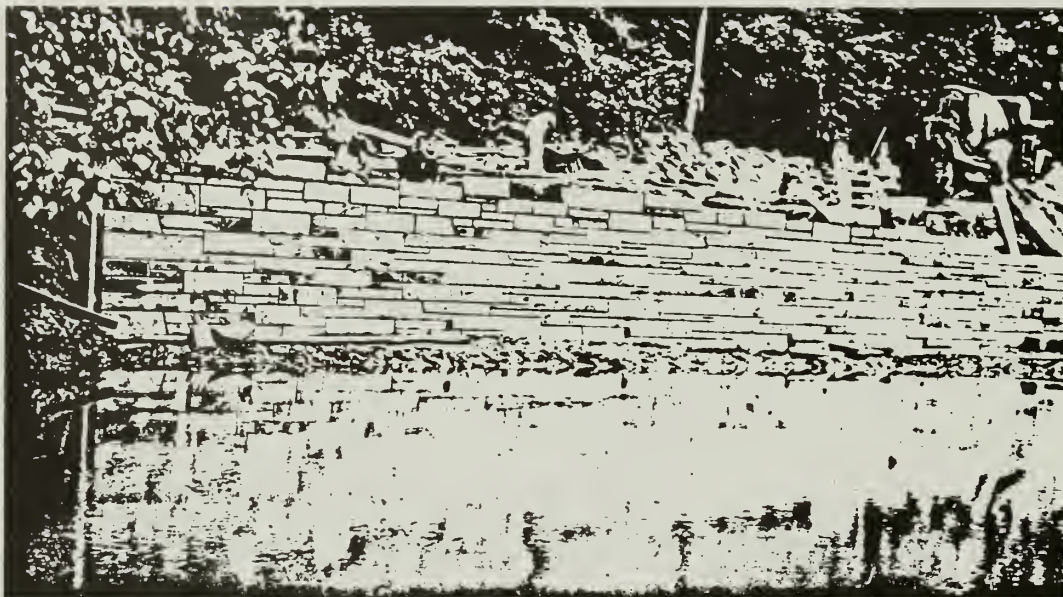


Two 30-Ft. Sections of the New Retaining Wall at the N.W.end were Carried Down on a Uniform Slope. Pilasters were Placed at the ends of each 30-Ft.Section Throughout the Length of the Wall.

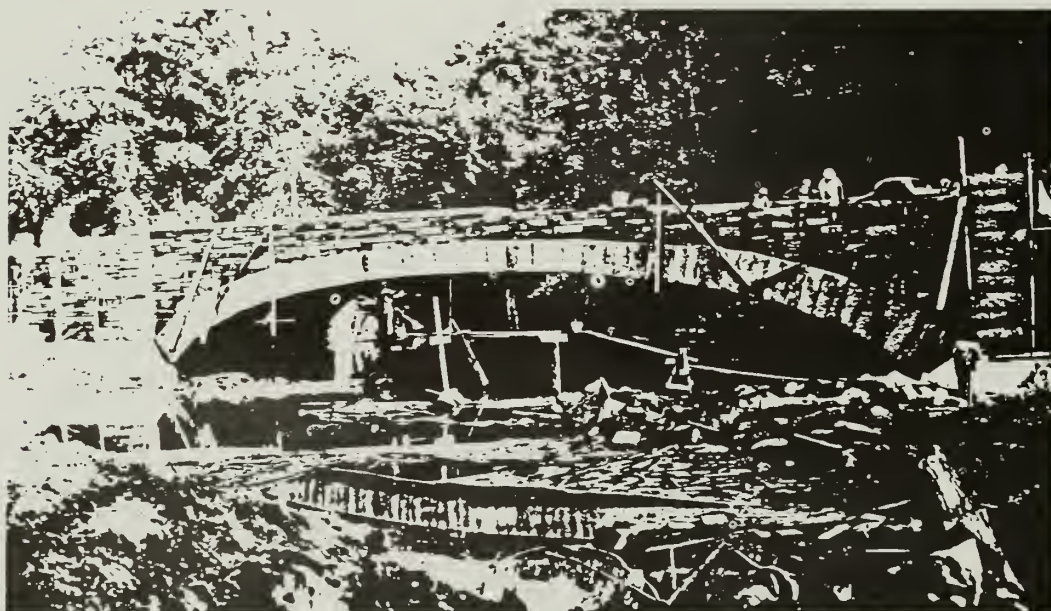


Ditch for Placing Tile Underdrain in the Slide Proper.

APPENDIX I



Stone Facing in the Wingwall



Stone Masonry in the Parapets

CHAPTER IV

GEORGE WASHINGTON MEMORIAL PARKWAY

Extending from the coastal plain, past the fall line, and onto the Piedmont region, George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) is one of most heavily traveled parkways in the national park system. It protects a substantial series of resources along the shores of the Potomac River and permits thousands of commuters to experience a more pleasant drive to and from work.

DESCRIPTION

As one of the nation's premier parkways, George Washington Memorial Parkway comprises 7,146 acres extending 38.3 miles adjacent to the Potomac. The initial section of the parkway, Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, which opened in November 1932, extends 15.2 miles from the Memorial Bridge to President George Washington's home. The highway commemorates the first president, preserves the natural setting, and provides a quality entryway for visitors to the nation's capital.

Another section of the parkway runs from Memorial Bridge to the Capital Beltway/Interstate 495, a distance of 9.7 miles. This portion, which is in both Virginia and Maryland, protects scenic vistas, contains numerous historical and archeological resources, and serves as another quality entryway into Washington, D.C. All but a small portion of the parkway north of Chain Bridge, in the District, opened during 1966, on land acquired by the cooperating states, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCP & PC), and the National Park Service (see map).

Planners for the McMillan Plan and the Capper-Cramton Act intended George Washington Memorial Parkway to be part of a system of shoreline parkways on both sides of the Potomac from the Great Falls to Mount Vernon. Through the years the parkway has been subjected to increasing pressures from development including large federal installations: National Airport, the Pentagon, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Central Intelligence Agency. Of major concern has been the mushrooming population of the Washington area and the proliferation of vehicular traffic. The parkway has increasingly become the route of commuters; average daily traffic counts in 1987 show, for example, 77,000 for the northern section and 90,000 for the central section at National Airport.¹ Despite below-

1. "Fact Sheet," George Washington Memorial Parkway, April 1988, unpublished.

average fatality rates per miles traveled, highway safety standards are urged upon National Park Service management, and such opportunities for change arise when rehabilitating and renovating the parkway occur. At present, renovation is underway and pressure mounts for accommodating even more traffic on a roadway created for commemoration, preservation, and recreation, not urban transportation.

George Washington Memorial Parkway is a major part of a succession of plans to link various parks in the nation's capital by means of parkways, drives, and boulevards. The plan issued by the McMillan Commission recommended a route along both sides of the Potomac River linking the home of George Washington with other areas he frequented, all the way to the Great Falls of the Potomac. Additional linkage would be secured by a parkway along Rock Creek, which would tie in with a proposed Fort Drive. Such a road would permit visitors an entryway to the capital befitting its stature.

The first segment of this design, Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, culminated with its dedication in November 1932. This highway ran from Mount Vernon to Memorial Bridge and provided superb views of the monumental core and the Potomac shore. The objectives were to honor the first president by connecting sites that commemorated his life, to capture and preserve the environments associated with the region, and to permit visitors an enjoyable driving experience. To that end, a movement to continue the route along both sides of the Potomac gained momentum, though considerable time elapsed before some sections were built.

GWMP incorporates much from parkways built earlier in New York, Virginia, and North Carolina. It, too, "lies lightly on the land" and combines the traditional design elements of parkways, as opposed to those of freeways. By the start of construction, important lessons had been learned about the impact such a trafficway would have on development adjacent to its corridor. Shortly after completion, use burgeoned as commuters discovered the route, a prologue to many current management problems.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

George Washington Memorial Parkway should be included in the National Register of Historic Places as nationally significant under criteria (listed in priority order) (C) landscape architecture and (B) commemoration of George Washington. One of the last parkways completed among the many in the eastern United States, GWMP preserves a sizable amount of territory once familiar to George Washington.



GEORGE WASHINGTON MEMORIAL PARKWAY

POTOMAC

MARYLAND
VIRGINIA

Great Falls

Bea

MONTGOMERY

Saloma Village

RIVER

MONTGOMERY

TRIC MOON

FACTORY

Water tank

Central Insurance

Agency

Water tank

Water tank

Water tank

Water tank

Water tank

Water tank

Water tank

Water tank

Water tank

Water tank

Water tank

Water tank

Water tank

Water tank

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Water tank

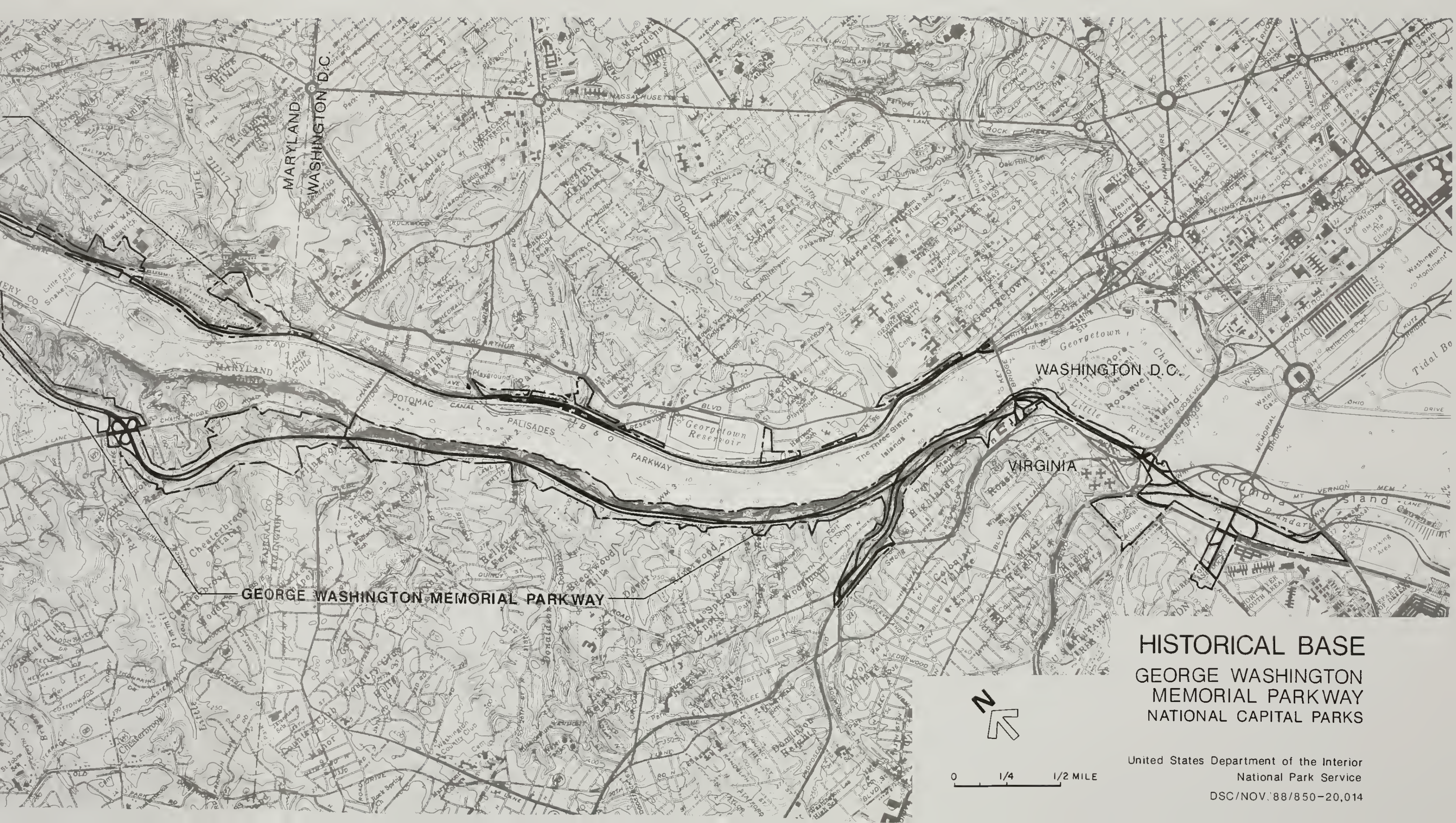
Water tank

Water tank

Water tank

Water tank

Water tank



HISTORICAL BASE
GEORGE WASHINGTON
MEMORIAL PARKWAY
NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
DSC/NOV.'88/850-20,014

Beginning with the McMillan Plan of 1902, planners discussed a roadway linking Mount Vernon with the Great Falls on the Potomac. This continued to be an issue, though somewhat downplayed, during the early discussions of Mount Vernon Memorial Highway. However, it rose again with the Capper-Cramton Act of 1930, which set in motion the means to make the parkway a reality. Well known landscape architects, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Charles W. Moore II, and Gilmore D. Clarke (heavily involved in Westchester County parkways, Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, and Blue Ridge Parkway) invested much time and energy in the parkway. These individuals together with the National Park Service, the Bureau of Public Roads, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the Commission of Fine Arts, and several local governments kept the idea alive, shepherded it through, and assisted in completion of the parkway. Efforts took on more significance with the opening of Mount Vernon Memorial Highway in 1932, when the public could see the value of such a roadway. As a parkway, GWMP has several areas of significance: community planning and development, landscape architecture, transportation, commemoration, and preservation.

One of the reasons George Washington Memorial Parkway is nationally significant is that it is associated with a long and continuous planning effort for the Washington, D.C., region. Though a direct linkage to L'Enfant's plan cannot be established, that plan laid the basis for subsequent planning efforts. In 1898, the Permanent System of Highways Plan (Highway Act of 1898) established a systematic plan to complete in orderly fashion what L'Enfant had begun. Specific efforts incorporating GWMP were then included in the Park Improvement Commission of the District of Columbia, commonly known as the McMillan Plan of 1902. The principal landscape architect of that plan, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., pushed for parks that would be intensively used, a democratic approach. He urged connections between parks including a road network that would extend parks to the perimeters of the regional city, in particular to Mount Vernon, and along both sides of the Potomac to the Great Falls.

In the 1927 National Capital Park and Planning Commission report, Eliot and Olmsted stated the importance of parks and linkages between them and gave a strong endorsement to the McMillan Commission's findings for a parkway along the Potomac. Despite opposition from the public utilities, the planning commission vigorously promoted a parkway, by the Capper-Cramton Act of 1930, to the Great Falls. This act established the funding and planning for the parkway, creating the means for design and construction between 1930 and 1966. Intended as a cooperative venture among various levels of government, the Capper-Cramton Act accomplished most of what had been set in motion at the turn of the century.

Another major reason for the GWMP's significance involves George Washington's association with the Potomac River corridor. His enterprising efforts to tap the hinterlands of the new country through canals along the Potomac are still evident around the Great Falls, and the route to and from his Mount Vernon home often took him along the Virginia shore of the parkway route. Likewise, the selection of the site for the nation's new capital was his, as was the selection of L'Enfant to design the capital. Like the older Mount Vernon section, the upper parkway commemorates the life of Washington. It provides unparalleled views of the city he founded and the river he traveled.

The planning and design of GWMP has associative significance as well. The vision of McMillan, Capper, and Cramton was put into plans and designs by Olmsted, Eliot, and Clarke. Clarke remained especially involved in the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway project, as well as the Baltimore-Washington and Blue Ridge parkways. At the same time, he served as chairman of the influential Commission of Fine Arts. Previously, Olmsted and Eliot had extensive planning and design experience in Boston and Washington, D.C., and long public service careers as landscape architects.

Another significant aspect is the function of GWMP as a designed entryway into the nation's capital: part of a strong effort over the years to provide visitors with entries appropriate to the important role played by Washington, D.C., in the national and international community. As such, it provides a grand approach to the monumental core of the capital, dipping and rising with the landscape, providing glimpses of the Potomac and the monuments beyond.

Finally, the GWMP has significance as an instrument of conservation and protection of resources. By its very existence, it prevents development along the river corridor, and removes development potentially detrimental to the natural resources. The Great Falls is the prime recipient of this protection, which has preserved it from becoming a generating site for hydroelectricity. Other areas that have received protection include the palisades, the resources associated with the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, Patowmack Canal, and even the viewsheds in a variety of locales along the length of the upper parkway.

Today, commuter traffic provides the heaviest use of the parkway. Unfortunately, commuters experience it unlike that intended by the originators. The fit of an essentially rural setting into a developing regional urban community is difficult at best.

HISTORY OF THE PARKWAY

Early references to a system of parks connected by parkways laid the groundwork for implementation of the McMillan Plan. Planners envisioned "drives along the palisades of the Potomac above Georgetown to Great Falls and down the River to Mount Vernon."² These drives had certain definitions:

Parkways or ways through or between parks; distinguished from highways or ordinary streets by the dominant purpose of recreation rather than movement; restricted to pleasure vehicles, and arranged with regard for scenery, topography and similar features rather than for directness.³

For Charles Eliot, NCP & PC official, the 28-mile corridor along the Potomac would capture many "inspirational values." He believed "no area in the United States combine[s] so many historical monuments in so small a district as the Potomac River Valley in the Washington region."⁴

The proposed parkway would link with Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, which began as an idea in Alexandria, Virginia, in 1886, but did not receive authorization until May 1928. However, urgency because of the approaching bicentennial of Washington's birth in 1932, finally prompted action leading to the opening of the parkway in that year. In the midst of this GWMP obtained strong endorsement from the Capper-Cramton Act of 1930. Before passage of that act, various threats to the scenic values of the proposed route surfaced regularly. Representative Cramton urged the nation to protect the area because,

The palisades of the Potomac are daily being blasted, serious industrial encroachments threaten, wooded areas are being destroyed, and power interests have seriously urged replacement of the unique and outstanding natural beauties of Great Falls and the gorge of the Potomac with man-made reservoirs of much more commonplace, artificial beauty.⁵

Proponents spoke in the broadest of terms, linking the area sought to the desire of the populace at large, and the overwhelming role of President Washington in the history of the United States. To do

2. Charles W. Eliot II, "Preliminary Report, PARK SYSTEM FOR DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, Submitted in Accordance with Program of Work Adopted August, 1926," December, 1926, p. 1. National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 4.

3. Ibid., p. 20.

4. Charles W. Eliot II, "The George Washington Memorial Parkway," *Landscape Architecture*, Vol. XXII, April, 1932, p. 191.

5. Press Release, Congressman Louis C. Cramton, January 27, 1930, p. 1, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2774.

less, went the argument, would be to ignore the wishes of the American people. Several organizations also lobbied for the bill, including the American Society of Landscape Architects, the American Institute of Architects, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the Garden Society of America, and the American Civic Association.⁶ In May 1930, the bill became law (see the section on "Legislation") with a sizable (given the economic condition of the United States) appropriation of \$33.5 million.

To acquire the land, Congress authorized \$7.5 million to the NCP & PC, to be matched by the bordering states of Virginia and Maryland in money or in long-term, interest-free loans. Half of the cost of acquiring the land was the basic arrangement necessary with state governments or "political subdivisions thereof." Assistance came from two organizations formed specifically for the parkway project: the George Washington Memorial Parkway Association, Inc., and the George Washington Memorial Parkway Fund, Inc. The former group supported the effort by forming state chapters that, in turn, "impress[ed] upon the people the necessity of guarding the beauty of the Nation's Capital by preserving its historic river and enlisting their aid in forwarding the proposed parkway."⁷ Aid for the association came from the latter (fund) group, which took temporary title to recently acquired land. Both groups, however, had little to do during the Great Depression.

Early estimates for the cost of land came to \$5.5 million in Maryland and Virginia. By the summer of 1933, 390 of an estimated 6,100 acres had been acquired.⁸ Money for such purchases stemmed from formal agreements drafted between the National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the governments subscribing monies.⁹ That same summer, the Commonwealth of Virginia allocated \$25,000 with the presumption that Arlington and Fairfax counties would pledge similar amounts. The NCP & PC budgeted \$50,000 for this purpose. Once the United States secured title to the land, the cost of development would be borne by the federal government.

Because land acquisition moved slowly, interested parties made various attempts to speed things along. One such effort came from a proposal by Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. After explaining the background of planning for a parkway along the river and

6. Ibid., p. 2.

7. *Washington Evening Star*, February 17, 1933, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 3.

8. Memorandum from Demaray (Acting Director, National Park Service) to the Secretary of the Interior, July 22, 1933, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2774. As of April 1988, George Washington Memorial Parkway covers 7,146 acres.

9. "Agreement Between The National Capital Park And Planning Commission, The Board Of Commissioners Of Arlington County, Virginia, And The Governor Of Virginia," July 28-29, 1933, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 12. The Agreement comprises five pages of text, including several sections from the Capper-Cramton Act of 1930.

reiterating the amount of land in government ownership, Ickes stated what land needed to be acquired. Finally, he asked:

Would you be willing to authorize the purchase of the foregoing areas? Their acquisition is needed for the work of the Emergency Conservation Work Camps and would seem to be in line with your policy to buy additional lands in the south for that purpose.¹⁰

President Roosevelt had more than a passing interest in the project. Earlier, in the spring of 1933, he had made an inspection trip to the Great Falls area, evidenced by the NCP & PC preparing a briefing package for him after the tour.¹¹ This suggests that key members of the administration carried the day as a first unit of the parkway received authorization, and \$280,000 was made available in mid-summer 1934.

To begin the parkway project, a working arrangement suggested by C. Marshall Finnan, superintendent of the National Capital Parks, initiated an interbureau agreement.¹² The Bureau of Public Roads assumed the lead, doing studies and planning for the parkway; review and approval was reserved for the National Capital Parks. The director of the National Park Service in conjunction with the Bureau of Public Roads, the Fine Arts Commission, and the Planning Commission shared the final decision on the location of the road.¹³ Conceptualization of the design took form, through the efforts of all the organizations and, especially, from the advice of Gilmore D. Clarke. He persuaded members of a delegation touring the proposed areas that the parkway should be designed with two lanes in each direction: "the rugged terrain lends itself more suitably for the construction of two narrow roads rather than one wide one."¹⁴ Clarke also advanced the idea that such a design would preserve the landscape (see section on "Design" and Appendix A).

Private utility interests remained an important issue of the parkway project. In 1928, after protracted debate, Congress legislated a requirement that "no permit should be issued to any private interests for

10. Ickes to President (Franklin D. Roosevelt), November 1933, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2774.

11. National Capital Park and Planning Commission, "The George Washington Memorial Parkway From Mount Vernon to Great Falls along the Potomac River," April, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Photo Album # 202. This is a 119 page briefing report specially prepared for President Roosevelt, including numerous maps and photographs and an excellent summary section on the competing interests for the Great Falls of the Potomac: water power vs. park interests. (Hereafter referred to as Franklin D. Roosevelt Library Album.)

12. Finnan to Demaray, July 21, 1934, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 130.

13. Ibid.

14. Fine Arts Commission Chairman to National Capital Park and Planning Commission, June 1, 1934, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 130. At the time the chairman was Charles Moore.

the development of water power in the Potomac River below the pool above Great Falls until further action of Congress."¹⁵ Again in 1930, Congress passed similar legislation while awaiting reports on the feasibility of private power development along the Potomac. Private utilities owned property on the river, principally Great Falls Power Company, which in 1904, bought land there for \$600,000. It owned 870 acres outright and half interest in another 82 acres.¹⁶ The company had "refused to sell unless the U.S. would agree never to develop hydro-electric power at the falls."¹⁷ Other property owners included Great Falls Farm Corporation, Washington and Old Dominion Railway, and the C&O Canal; they owned an additional 1,000 acres.¹⁸ Taking lines for the parkway corridor cut across the privately owned property, and in 1934, a request of \$3 million was made to the Bureau of the Budget for the purchase of many of these tracts.

Depression-era concerns and federal and state (Maryland and Virginia) programs precluded much activity in buying land and constructing the parkway. Times were hard, programs had short-term objectives, and the planning commission lost influence in overseeing orderly growth and development in the nation's capital. Several factors combined to delay the construction. Of course, land prices rose as land in the corridor changed hands and speculation added value to properties, though property acquisition had gotten underway.

Various means of raising public consciousness about the project came from a variety of articles. In May 1935, *Review of Reviews* published an article written by Arno B. Cammerer, director of the National Park Service, exhorting Americans to support the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the preservation of much of the Potomac River corridor to the Great Falls.¹⁹ In late September 1936, a series of articles by W.A.S. Douglas in the *Washington Herald* advocated the same.²⁰ The series presented thoughtful reasons for setting aside the Potomac River from the Great Falls to Mount Vernon as a memorial to the first president. Douglas sought to mold opinion to "make it [the Potomac] the

15. Nolen to Cammerer, September 22, 1934, p. 1, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 475.

16. Ibid., p. 2.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Arno B. Cammerer, "Push The Washington Parkway," *Review of Reviews*, May 1935, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2774.

20. *Washington Herald*, September 20 to September 28, 1936, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 17.

most beautiful waterway in America," and remove the neglect he observed along its course.²¹ Much of the appeal of Douglas's reasoning derived from the fact that congressmen looked after their respective state agendas to the neglect of the District of Columbia, which lacked a champion and proponent. It seemed clear to Douglas that the nation's capital needed to become the national masterpiece envisioned by key advocates through the years.

Working toward the same objective of raising public awareness, Max S. Wehrly completed two reports for the NCP & PC in 1937.²² In these reports, he sought to move the project forward through informing the planning commission about the status. They crystallized arguments for the parkway, its physical and historical setting, its role in the region, and the urgency of acquiring land at existing instead of mounting prices. Passages from these two reports found their way into print and became a topic of conversation as the planning and design effort proceeded toward the construction phase. Wehrly also wrote a report on improving Conduit Road (present McArthur Boulevard) in Washington, D.C., and Maryland as one corridor for the parkway.²³

In the summer of 1935, an important sector of George Washington Memorial Parkway obtained funding in the amount of \$224,236. The National Park Service singled out 1-1/4 miles from the Francis Scott Key Bridge to Columbia Island for construction, though it meant acquiring an expensive piece of property.²⁴ A powerhouse of the Washington and Old Dominion Railway had to be purchased, though by agreement, the commonwealth of Virginia had responsibility for half of the cost. Director Cammerer's justification stated, "the immediate need for this particular section of the Parkway is to eliminate the heavy traffic flow and congestion from the District of Columbia through M Street to Georgetown."²⁵ He thought traffic would use the Memorial Bridge and the parkway thereby alleviating congestion on Key Bridge. Moreover, Cammerer convincingly argued for the need to obtain the railway property to prevent having to raise the eastbound lane to permit access for Rosslyn Plaza traffic.²⁶

21. Ibid., September 21, 1936.

22. Max S. Wehrly, "National Capital Park & Planning Commission, Summary Report, George Washington Memorial Parkway – Virginia Side," September 16, 1937, unpublished; Max S. Wehrly, "National Capital Park & Planning Commission, General Report on George Washington Memorial Parkway, Upper Potomac," December 1937, unpublished; National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 17.

23. Max S. Wehrly, "Brief of the Improvement of Conduit Road as it Relates to the George Washington Memorial Parkway District Line to Great Falls, Md., 1927-1937," unpublished report, National Archives, Record Group 328.

24. Cammerer to Ickes, June 26, 1935, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 475.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

Secretary Harold L. Ickes concurred, though he did insist that \$26,000 be expended for plantings to screen an "unsightly view of the railroad yards" just north of the Circle at Alexandria.²⁷

That same year the Interior Department Appropriation Act made \$7.5 million available to the National Park Service for use on roads and trails. Of this amount the National Capital Parks secured nearly \$270,000, most of which it earmarked for the George Washington Memorial Parkway.²⁸ The focus of work continued to be from Key Bridge to Columbia Island, though \$21,100 was designated for a survey from Arlington Memorial Bridge to the Great Falls.²⁹

During the summer of 1937, parkway construction continued apace. Key figures in prioritizing the construction were drawn from the Bureau of Public Roads, National Park Service, and National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Key Bridge and a connector from Rosslyn Plaza Parkway to the bridge was designated to receive a portion of the \$270,000 remaining in the account of the Bureau of Public Roads.³⁰ Management also sought an appropriation in 1939 for a new span to permit the parkway to pass beneath Key Bridge.

Throughout the depression, members of the NCP & PC expressed concern about the nonparticipation of state and local governments in matching funds or buying and donating land for the parkway corridor. Such assistance had been specified in the Capper-Cramton Act of 1930. Writing in 1938, J.C. Nichols, member of the NCP & PC and real estate developer from Kansas City, went on record, "I feel the time has come when we should discontinue cooperation with Maryland unless these authorities will cooperate with us in a reasonable way on their part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway."³¹ He added that only projects of "local benefit" were funded, whereas the greater objective of a parkway to the Great Falls was neglected. The latter, according to Nichols, had both national and local significance. Furthermore, he advocated that the Maryland legislature act with "reasonable cooperation" soon, or he, like other commission members, would not vote for any other local projects.

27. Tolson to Burlew, July 31, 1935, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 475.

28. Demaray to Burlew, February 8, 1938, National Archives, Record Group 79, 2774.

29. Ibid. See Appendix B for a rather complete budgetary breakdown.

30. Superintendent to Director, September 20, 1937, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2774. C. Marshall Finnan was Superintendent of the National Capital Parks at that time.

31. Nichols to Delano, December 22, 1938, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

This did not move the state of Maryland to action. It did, however, cause Prince George's County to proceed, no doubt at the prodding of the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, which in turn had been pressured by the NCP & PC. The county did not anticipate any participation by the state and inquired about passing legislation of its own to match monies for land acquisition. T.S. Settle, secretary of the NCP & PC responded that a county could do just that and sent along copies of legislation passed by Virginia in 1930.³² That act gave recognition to the parkway project and authorization to "the political subdivisions along the route to cooperate with the National Government and make contributions for same."³³

Virginia appropriated \$25,000 in 1932, with the provision that county governments do the same. Arlington County complied, and the \$50,000 total, after matching with federal funds, was used to buy land of unit No. 1 – Key Bridge area.³⁴ Again in 1938, the Virginia general assembly appropriated \$50,000 with the same caveat for local governments.³⁵ Finally, in 1939, Maryland began to move toward participation when the legislature passed an act permitting Montgomery County "to issue and sell \$150,000 worth of bonds to match a similar amount from the National Capital Park and Planning Commission."³⁶ They designated this money for purchase of land in Montgomery County between the District line and the Great Falls. That same year, the NCP & PC sought a supplemental appropriation from Congress for a like amount. A rationale in the House document points to the urgency of moving to acquire the land because of the rising values and continued development in the parkway corridor.³⁷

Before World War II, planning for the parkway to extend all the way to the Great Falls continued. In fact, an estimate of \$1 million for purchase of land above the falls underscored the need to acquire the land quickly before land values rose even more.³⁸ The estimate, based upon \$265,000 per mile, reflected a road on both sides of the river for about 2 miles to a bridge site proposed above the falls.

32. Settle to Duckett, March 9, 1939, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. 76th Congress, 1st Session, House of Representatives, Document No. 437, p. 2, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2835.

37. Ibid., p. 3.

38. Nolen to Keddy, February 19, 1940, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2774.

A problem that surfaced during World War II for the Maryland portion to the Great Falls dampened the parkway efforts. Writing to the Park Service director, Associate Director A.E. Demaray pointed out that the Capper-Cramton Act contained a provision that stated "no money shall be expended by the United States for the construction of said highway on the Maryland side of the Potomac except as part of the Federal Aid Highway Program."³⁹ Under that program, monies could not be used to construct a highway on lands owned by the United States. Because much land had already been purchased, an act had to be passed to permit the parkway to continue. Therefore, Demaray had an amendment drawn to allow monies to be expended so that when World War II ended, work could continue. The amendment eventually passed and became law in August 1946, though by April 1945, Acting Superintendent, National Capital Parks, Harry T. Thompson reported that all the land needed had been purchased.⁴⁰

Until final passage, various schemes kept the project from losing momentum. The strategy interpreted that Federal Aid Highway Program funds could be expended for planning and surveys, but not for construction.⁴¹ It proved to be an approach whereby management would proceed until told to do otherwise, even to the point of not seeking the opinion of the comptroller general of the United States.⁴² Concurrent with this activity, the project slowed considerably on the Virginia side because of a lack of funds for property acquisition. Only a small section of land above Key Bridge and near Lee Highway had been obtained.

In late October 1946, a summary of parkway activities to date reached Congressman Hatton W. Sumners of Texas.⁴³ U.S. Grant, III chairman of the NCP & PC, reported a "50 percent completion as to land acquisition," but little construction other than that for Mount Vernon Memorial Highway. Land procurement above Key Bridge was to be completed in the winter and construction scheduled "up the valley of Spout Run" in 1947.⁴⁴ Over three-fourths of the land for the parkway in Montgomery

39. Associate Director to Director, September 7, 1944, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2835.

40. Acting Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Chief Landscape Architect, April 4, 1945, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2835.

41. Associate Director to Director, September 13, 1945, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2835.

42. Ibid.

43. Grant to Sumners, October 28, 1946, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 130.

44. Ibid.

County, Maryland, had been acquired by late 1946, but Prince George's County had so little interest that it could not raise enough money to make the necessary match.

Chairman Grant of the NCP & PC summarized activity in Virginia too. He believed that Fairfax County had made the least progress and that the outlook was bleak despite some of the most outstanding "high bluffs and tributary stream valleys on the Virginia side."⁴⁵ The better views of the gorge and falls also could be seen from the heights noted. Grant added that he hoped renewed local interest might return to pre-war levels. At the end of his report Grant expressed optimism that participation would begin and construction would continue on both sides of the Potomac.

During 1948, the Virginia Legislature made \$125,000 available for acquiring land in the corridor stretching from Spout Run to the Fairfax-Arlington County line. The area sought had become very active with real estate developers since the end of World War II, and the need to act on parkway matters seemed urgent. Grant hoped Arlington County would put up money soon to match that from the state and that already in hand from the federal government.⁴⁶ Surveys needed to be completed soon, given the rapidity of development in the area.

Persuasion about development did not always carry the day and other strategies to obtain matching funds were resorted to in the years to follow. A device used by Maryland permitted bonds to be issued and signed by the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission and by Montgomery and Prince George's counties. When matured, these bonds could be redeemed by certified checks that permitted the release of dollars from the NCP & PC for the purchase of land. The commission sought to persuade Virginia to use the same approach and wrote an amendment to the Capper-Cramton Act permitting such.⁴⁷

At the 1952 session of the Virginia general assembly, \$150,000 was appropriated for matching federal funds on the parkway. This enabled Fairfax County to begin its first unit of the George Washington Memorial Parkway extending from the Arlington County line to Georgetown Pike. The roadway moved slowly up the Potomac as governments observed advantages to the facility and money became available in the postwar economy.

45. Ibid., p. 2.

46. Grant to MacDonald, April 1, 1948, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

47. Settle to Nolen, April 24, 1950, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

A breakthrough of sorts for the National Park Service came with the 1954 Federal Aid Highway Act. Given the difficulty of getting underway and remaining so, the act allowed contract authorization for national parkways for several fiscal years running. For the Park Service this meant being able to program construction in advance; for the parkway it portended more systematic progress toward completion. Other aspects of the project had to be advanced as a result, including the acquisition of land, which meant money, sooner.

As the Washington, D.C., area grew following World War II, government facilities began to disperse around the suburban perimeters, affecting each of the parkways. In the course of seeking more money from Congress in 1956 to extend the GWMP parkway toward American Legion Bridge (Cabin John Bridge), the proposed move of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to the Langley, Virginia, area became an issue. In a letter to CIA Director Allen W. Dulles, a National Park Service official elaborated on the time schedule and costs of extending the parkway above Spout Run. E.T. Scoyen placed the estimate at \$8.5 million for the 6 miles, including grading, structures, paving, and land acquisition costs.⁴⁸ A timetable projected the section from Spout Run to Chain Bridge to be under contract by July 1, 1956, and that from Chain Bridge to Langley by June 1, 1957; paving for these sections would be underway during the fall of 1957 and 1958, respectively.⁴⁹ Assisting these anticipated schedules were sizable commitments of money from Virginia governments. The commonwealth of Virginia and Fairfax County approved large sums of money for land purchases: \$100,000 in 1955, from the county line to the old Georgetown Road; \$400,000 for land between the county line and the CIA; and the NCP & PC anticipated \$325,000 more for land between the CIA and American Legion Bridge (Cabin John) crossing of the Potomac.⁵⁰ These efforts related to other significant actions.

One such important effort, begun in 1955, sought to bring parks up to requirements of increased demand during the term of National Park Service Director Conrad L. Wirth. "Mission 66" as it came to be known, held promise for the parkway. Writing in 1956, Wirth anticipated completing the parkway to Great Falls "with the possible exception of the bridge across the Potomac."⁵¹ He determined that it would be best to finish the section to the falls first and below Washington, D.C., last. Fiscal year construction programs for 1957-1959 included \$7,150,000 for work in Maryland and \$900,000 for

48. Scoyen to Dulles, May 4, 1956, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

49. Ibid. See more complete detail in Appendix C.

50. Finley to President, June 8, 1959, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

51. Wirth to Bartholomew, July 18, 1956, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

Virginia. In addition, Director Wirth indicated that "\$8,000,000 of CIA funds will shortly become available for the sections in Virginia from Spout Run to the CIA site near Langley."⁵² The estimate of the funds needed for the federal share of the land acquisition costs to complete the parkway came to \$2 million, which Wirth urged be programmed soon.

An obstacle to construction between the CIA offices and the capital beltway arose in 1959, when the agencies involved recommended a different alignment. This was due to increased costs caused by land that had steep slopes and several small creeks that needed bridging. Modifications from the major agencies involved necessitated the Department of Commerce to transfer land better suited for the parkway.⁵³ The request was negotiated at the secretarial level, and completion of the parkway section was set for 1961, providing "a continuous parkway facility from the American Legion Bridge to downtown Washington."⁵⁴

During the late 1950s, the Senate Appropriations Committee closely scrutinized requests for the parkway's "desirability and need." This resulted in the National Capital Park and Planning Commission contracting with Charles W. Eliot, II at a cost of \$5,000, to review plans for the Fairfax and Prince George's county portions of the parkway still to be completed.⁵⁵ Eliot, a renowned landscape architect and professor at Harvard University, had had a long and intimate association with the parkway project. For 7 years (1926-1933), he had served as city planner and director of the NCP & PC, during which time he wrote a report supporting a park system for the nation's capital.

Specific directions given to Eliot focused on whether to extend the parkway to Great Falls and Fort Washington. Land acquisition issues and the difficulties in engineering a parkway near the river in the vicinity of the gorge and the Great Falls implied considerable expenditure of money, as would the design for a road on each side, plus a bridge over the Potomac above the falls. The Prince George's issue was basically one of land acquisition difficulties from the District line to Fort Washington.

After considerable study, Eliot concluded that the plans should move forward in Fairfax County so that the falls and palisades might be protected and preserved. He also concluded that, the land to be acquired should more nearly approximate that of the original 1927 plan, "in order to avoid any road

52. Ibid.

53. Assistant Secretary to Secretary, June 3, 1959, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

54. Ibid.

55. Charles W. Eliot, "Statement For Senate Committee On Interior And Insular Affairs, George Washington Memorial Parkway, July 11-12, 1957, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

construction, now or in the future, on the bluffs facing the river, and to safeguard the valleys of the side streams."⁵⁶ The 1939 plan had called for road building that would affect scenic areas and cost more. From the new beltway (circumferential highway), Eliot believed an adaptation of Route 193 (Old Georgetown Pike) might be used with an additional two lanes; at the top of Prospect Hill traffic might be separated onto Old Dominion Drive, with a new parkway entrance to the area of Great Falls.⁵⁷ He went on to advocate preservation of areas through special-use permits or scenic easements, lifetime estates to some larger landowners, and a delay in recreational developments. Eliot believed the value for much that had been done, "depends on control of the bluffs and valleys on the Virginia side of the river."⁵⁸

Regarding the section below the District to Fort Washington on the Maryland side, Eliot especially underscored the need to change the alignment because of buildings and subdivisions that had sprung up. Such development "will compel other revisions to the great loss of the project unless acquisition can proceed at an early date."⁵⁹ He also argued for a wider right-of-way near Oxon Run and Fort Foote plus riparian rights around Broad Creek Bay and Swan Creek near Fort Washington.⁶⁰ Eliot concluded with a plea to build the parkway to Fort Washington as originally planned. He said this would be an integral part of a metropolitan system for preserving, protecting, and making resources accessible for those seeking recreational opportunities in the Washington, D.C., area. "The cooperation of the State and County authorities is assured. The building and subdivision activities along the way make early and vigorous action most desirable."⁶¹

Despite Eliot's report, funding did not become available for extending the parkway to Fort Washington nor to the Great Falls. Lack of cooperation among local, state, and federal governments prevented the parkway from reaching proposed limits, but other factors also contributed. Opposition surfaced from the real estate interests seeking profit from development; from the environmental community who wished to preserve resources along the corridor; and from proponents of the Interstate Highway Act,

56. Ibid., p. 5.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. Charles W. Eliot, "National Capital Planning Commission Report, Review Of Fairfax County And Prince George's County Sections George Washington Memorial Parkway," July 8, 1957, p. 16, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box: Planning Files 1924-1967.

60. Ibid., pp. 16-17.

61. Ibid., p. 17.

which gave motorists a means to travel great distances, as opposed to scenic drives. These factors combined to prevent the construction of the parkway on both sides of the river to the Great Falls and Mount Vernon.

Parkway development ultimately extended along both sides of the Potomac – a small portion on the Maryland side but most on the Virginia side. Sections reaching completion were opened for use, such as the westernmost Maryland section in 1965, at the junction with MacArthur Boulevard. Today, George Washington Memorial Parkway has probably reached its limits, given the extensive development in the urban area and the escalating land values that preclude further land acquisition.

Legislation

Even before construction of Mount Vernon Memorial Highway could begin, legislation was introduced in Congress expanding upon the concept of a public project memorializing George Washington. The new plan complemented a 1924 act that called for the "comprehensive development of the park and playground system of the National Capital."⁶²

Early in 1929, H.R. 15524, the first measure legislating development of the parkway, was presented by the House Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds. This legislation, as amended, specified that \$7 million be spent for acquisition and development of lands on both sides of the river – half of this cost to be reimbursed within five years by the states of Virginia and Maryland. The bill, drafted by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the commissioners of the District of Columbia, and the Bureau of the Budget, called for a route extending from Mount Vernon along the Virginia side of the Potomac River to the Great Falls, except where the road passed through the city of Alexandria. Similarly, on the Maryland side the proposed route would extend from Fort Washington to the Great Falls.⁶³ "This parkway, taking control of the banks of the Potomac from Mount Vernon where Washington lived, through the Capital which he founded, to Great Falls where he had his industrial dreams, has tremendous possibilities for scenic enjoyment and recreation on land and water."⁶⁴

Although H.R. 15524 passed the House of Representatives unanimously on February 27, 1929, the measure was not finally approved. Instead, an identical bill, H.R. 26, cosponsored by Representative Louis C. Cramton (R. Michigan) and Senator Arthur Capper (R. Kansas), chairmen of the District

62. U.S. Congress, House, *Acquisition, Establishment, and Development of the George Washington Memorial Parkway*. H. Rept. No. 2523, 70th Cong., 2nd sess., 1929, pp. 1, 3.

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4. For the views of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, and the Bureau of the Budget, see *ibid.*, pp. 5-8.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

committee, was introduced in the next Congress late in 1929. The measure authorized \$33.5 million for establishment of a comprehensive park, parkway, and playground area near the capital.⁶⁵ In April 1930, the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia reported favorably on the bill, specifying that certain details be changed, but that the "prime objects" of the legislation remain intact. The purpose of the parkway was to develop and protect "scenic values of the National Capital," which were threatened by encroachment of residential and commercial interests. Enactment of the bill promised to "afford public control of the banks of the Potomac from Mount Vernon, where Washington lived, through the National Capital, which he founded, to Great Falls, where the old canal is a valuable relic of his work as an engineer."⁶⁶ Further, the parkway would "be a striking and suitable tribute to the Father of our Nation, and one in which the people of America will take just pride and enjoyment."⁶⁷ The bill won wide endorsement from sundry institutions and individuals who urged its passage, and on May 29, 1930, it became law.⁶⁸

The Capper-Cramton Act provided for development of the specified route in Virginia and Maryland, calling for the preservation and protection of both natural and historic resources, including the gorge and Great Falls of the Potomac, the old Patowmack Canal, and a part of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. Besides the roadway, the project included construction of access roads to the Great Falls and a bridge over the river. Further, forts Washington, Foote, and Hunt were to become part of the parkway once they were no longer needed for military purposes. Administration of the completed parkway would be the responsibility of the director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the national capital. In a related act passed the same day, Congress provided \$1 million (increased to \$4 million the following year) to cover expenses incurred by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission in implementing the project.⁶⁹ Subsequent House and Senate proposals called for clarifying the language of the act as it pertained to the transfer of Mount Vernon Memorial Highway and for providing adequate funding for the purchase of property deemed immediately essential for the

65. U.S. Congress, House, *Acquisition, Establishment, and Development of the George Washington Memorial Parkway*, H. Rept. No. 55, 71st Cong., 2d sess., 1929; U.S. Congress, Senate, *Washington, the National Capital*, prepared by H.P. Caemmerer, S. Doc. No. 332, 71st Cong., 3rd sess., 1932, p. 122.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9; U.S. *Statutes at Large*, XLVI, pp. 482-485.

69. *Ibid.*, pp. 483, 484-485, 864, 1367; U.S. Congress, House, *National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Communication from the President of the United States transmitting Supplemental Estimate of Appropriation for the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, in the Sum of \$1,000,000*. H. Doc., No. 458, 71st Cong., 2nd sess., 1930, pp. 1-2; Frederick Gutheim, *Worthy of the Nation: The History of Planning for the National Capital* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977), p. 198.

parkway.⁷⁰ In the 1940s and 1950s, several measures were introduced to modify provisions of the act to permit additional land acquisition and land exchange.⁷¹

Design

In general, references to the design concepts used for George Washington Memorial Parkway are difficult to locate. Scattered references exist but no organized body of material is available.

The most succinct statement on design comes from Charles W. Eliot, II, who characterized the parkway as similar to Mount Vernon Memorial Highway: it contained "grade separations, few entrances, border roads for service of abutting property, and a right-of-way never less and often much more than two hundred feet."⁷²

A growing set of parkway design guidelines could be drawn upon. An important statement of design principles assisting parkway efforts came from the Bureau of Public Roads (see Appendix D). In sum it stated recommendations for alignment, grade crossings, right-of-way, divided roadway, aesthetic qualities, topographical considerations, turnout areas, and access.⁷³ Legal definition also assisted design by declaring:

the term parkway has been pretty definitely tied down by legal definition as "an attenuated park with a road through it." Three characteristics determine a parkway: (1) linear form, (2) a road through it, (3) no right of light or air or access to abutting property.⁷⁴

70. U.S. Congress, House, *Amend the Act for the Acquisition, Establishment, and Development of the George Washington Memorial Parkway*, H. Rept. No. 2628, 71st Cong., 3d sess., 1931; U.S. Congress, Senate, *To Amend Act Relating to George Washington Memorial Parkway*, S. Rept. No. 1658, 71st Cong., 3d sess., 1931. For discussion of these measures, especially H.R. 16218, see U.S. Congress, House, *Hearings Before the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, House of Representatives*, January 28 and February 4 and 11, 1931, 71st Cong., 3d sess., *passim*.

71. U.S. Congress, Senate, *Development of the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the Comprehensive Park, Parkway, and Playground System of the National Capital*, S. Rept. No. 1766, 79th Cong., 2d sess., 1946; U.S. Congress, House, *Providing for an Addition to the George Washington Memorial Parkway by the Transfer from the Administrator of General Services to the Secretary of the Interior of the Tract of Land in Arlington County, Va., Commonly Known as the Nevius Tract*, H. Rept. No. 1601, 82d Cong., 2d sess., 1952; U.S. Congress, House *Authorizing Land Exchanges for Purposes of the George Washington Memorial Parkway in Montgomery County, Md.* H. Rept. No. 2597, 85th Cong., 2d sess., 1958; U.S. Congress, Senate, *Land Exchanges, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Montgomery County, Md.* S. Rept. No. 2210, 85th Cong., 2d sess., 1958.

72. Charles W. Eliot II, "The George Washington Memorial Parkway," *Landscape Architecture*, Vol. XXII, April, 1932, p. 194.

73. *Washington Star*, June 5, 1938, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

74. National Capital Park and Planning Commission, "Comments on Report of Maryland State Planning Commission on State Recreational Areas," unpublished 1938?, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

The taking lines for the parkway give insights into design matters. The NCP & PC determined that the lines, including the line above and slightly back of the bluffs, would be high on the hillsides to control the skyline.⁷⁵ The major concerns of the planners were the possibilities that urban growth would cloak the hillsides with development, and that the mere existence of a park would attract greater population densities. On occasion, the taking lines extended back from the river to include lands that contained opportunities to escape from the workaday world. The challenge came in juggling acquisition of land with providing access to them.

Scattered archival reference note GWMP, like Mount Vernon Highway, would have two lanes going each direction for a total width of 24 feet and a variable-width median. Planting plans, except those for Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, seem not to have been completed; however, references remain such as a letter from Gilmore D. Clarke in which he expressed that the American elm should not be mixed in a "border plantation."⁷⁶ He went on to say that concentrations of white pine might overpower other plantings yet constitute a very satisfactory material along the parkway. Budgeted amounts for plant material on GWMP were far less than what Clarke had to work with on the Westchester project.⁷⁷

The National Park Service petitioned the NCP & PC for a variance on a design by the Bureau of Public Roads for a section from Brookmont to the valley of Cabin John Creek.⁷⁸ Planning Director John Nolen concurred with the decision to conserve "slopes, trees, and natural conditions along the relatively narrow strip of land" for the parkway.⁷⁹ An upper road would follow the alignment of MacArthur Boulevard (then Conduit Road) and the lower road would go on acquired land, maintaining the character of the landscape.

As one of the premier parkways in the United States, George Washington Memorial Parkway provides an entryway into the nation's capital that designers had envisioned. It stands as an example of what may be accomplished when cultural and natural resources are combined with design concepts adaptable to the landscape. Associated with George Washington, notable landscape architects, and the cultural landscape along the Potomac, the parkway gives Americans a road deserving national register status.

75. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library Album, p. 17.

76. Clarke to Kirkpatrick, December 8, 1936, National Archives, Record Group 79.

77. Ibid.

78. Wirth to Bartholomew, December 2, 1955, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 129.

79. Ibid.

Contrary to the intent of its proponents, and to its detriment, the route has become increasingly overused by commuter traffic, much like the other parkways in the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area. It represents what Suitland Parkway and Baltimore-Washington Parkway will become when they are completed as additional entryways into the capital.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Design of George Washington Memorial Parkway-Gilmore D. Clarke

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
Washington, D. C.

June 1, 1934.

Dear Sirs:

On Sunday, April 22, 1934, representatives of your Commission, the National Park Service and the Commission of Fine Arts made a trip of inspection of the parks of the District of Columbia and also of the parks of the area proposed for the George Washington Memorial Parkway adjacent to Conduit Road.

Mr. Gilmore D. Clarke, landscape architect member of the Commission of Fine Arts, offers the following comment as to the plan of development of the George Washington Memorial Parkway:

"We visited one of the high points along the east side of the Potomac west of the Conduit Road which has been purchased for park purposes. From this point, an exceedingly fine view may be had to the south downstream. Later, when additional lands are purchased, views may be obtained up-stream, after trees are removed.

"We took occasion to discuss the plans for the George Washington Memorial Parkway to be constructed on the Virginia or west side of the Potomac and I urged, in connection with the studies now being prepared by the Bureau of Public Roads, that careful consideration should be given to the possibility of ultimately having two separated drives, each providing for two lanes of traffic in one direction. This means providing two roads each at least 22 or 24 feet in width.

"There is a distinct advantage in having separated drives for traffic in each direction and in this particular problem it is peculiarly appropriate, since the rugged terrain lends itself more suitably for the construction of two narrow roads rather than one wide one. The north-bound drive would probably be located near the river's edge,

the south-bound drive on or near the top of the paliades. In the case of the latter, bridges would be required for crossing the deep gorges, but these would not be expensive for a two lane drive.

"For the present, one drive, probably located on the lower level, would suffice. The upper road should be planned now but could be constructed some years later. The lower road should permit frequent opportunities for the pedestrian to reach the water's edge and, where possible, be located back from the river's edge at a higher elevation.

"The two drives might possibly cost more than a single road, but the amenities of the landscape in the gorge would be more easily preserved than in case a single wide drive is constructed. Two drives afford the motorist more varied scenery and the roadways may be constructed with increased curvature and gradients not practicable on a single two way drive."

The Commission of Fine Arts endorse the suggestions of

Mr. Clarke.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Respectfully yours,

(Signed) Charles Moore,

Chairman.

The National Capital Park
and Planning Commission,
Washington, D. C.

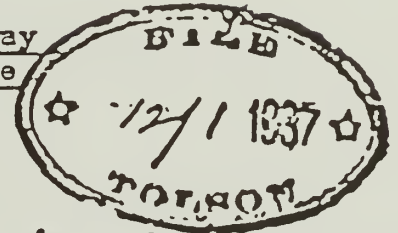
APPENDIX B

Funds Available for George Washington Memorial
Parkway between Columbia Island and Key Bridge

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

November 14, 1937.

Funds Available for Expenditure
on the George Washington Memorial Parkway
between Columbia Island and Key Bridge



Public Works:

George Washington Memorial Parkway Trestle over Boundary Channel	\$	94.23	
Approaches to Arlington Memorial Bridge, etc. ..		148,627.81	
Approach to Arlington Memorial Bridge, purchase of land		20,000.00	\$168,722.04

Roads and Trails, 1936:

George Washington Memorial Parkway, Columbia Island to Key Bridge; grading, riprap bank protection, bridge and retaining walls	\$129,700.00
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George Washington Memorial Parkway; trestle over Boundary Channel	10,286.19	139,986.19
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Roads and Trails, 1937-1938:

George Washington Memorial Parkway under Key Bridge	\$120,350.09
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Reconstruction of West End of Key Bridge for Underpass of the George Washington Memorial Parkway	113,512.00
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Key Bridge-Lee Highway Connection	29,700.00	263,562.09
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GRAND TOTAL	\$572,270.32
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APPENDIX C

Estimated Cost Spout Run to Langley, Virginia

May 5, 1956

George Washington Memorial Parkway

Estimated Cost Spout Run to Langley, Virginia
Section 1-D

	<u>Estimated Cost</u>	<u>Est. Date Contract Award</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Grading</u> (2-40 ft. roadways)			
Spout Run to Chain Bridge (2.7 mi.)	\$1,230,500	7-1-56	
Chain Bridge to Langley (3.3 mi.)	<u>1,528,000</u>	6-1-57	
Total Grading			\$2,758,500
<u>Structures</u>			
Spout Run Bridge - High level	402,300	10-1-56	
Spout Run Bridge - Low level	86,300	10-1-56	
Windy Run Bridge	546,000	7-1-56	
Donaldson Run Bridge	574,700	7-1-56	
Gulf Branch Bridge	517,200	7-1-56	
Glebe Road Overpass	459,800	1-1-57	
Pinevit Run Bridge	510,400	1-1-57	
Virginia Rte 123 Underpass	459,800	3-1-57	
Langley Grade Separation	<u>353,200</u>	3-1-57	
Total Structures			3,919,700
<u>Paving</u> (2-24 ft. reinf. concrete roadways)			
Spout Run to Chain Bridge (2.7 mi.)	594,800	10-1-57	
Chain Bridge to Langley (3.3 mi.)	<u>727,000</u>	9-1-58	
Total Paving			\$1,321,800
<u>Land Acquisition and Miscellaneous</u>		6-1-56	<u>11,500,000</u>
Grand Total			\$15,500,000

APPENDIX D

Parkway Design Recommendations of Bureau of Public Roads

The Bureau of Public Roads made recommendations through the years about parkway design:

1. Provide streamlined continuity in alignment. (Long, easy curves with transition curves or spirals to connect them with tangents.) No "flat wheels"--in other words, no tangents between curves in the same direction.
2. Elimination of grade crossings, railway or highway, at important intersecting thoroughfares, with access provisions.
3. Protected right of way control each side of the driveway (buffer) 200 feet average width, with a minimum of not less than 150 feet, eliminates slum conditions and hazards along the roadsides.
4. Wherever possible, flow of traffic should be so planned that at no place would it cross itself on entering or leaving. Traffic should enter and leave on the right hand (slow side), passing always (where practicable) above or beneath when coming from, or going to, the left.
5. Where feasible and economically justified by the volume of traffic, motor vehicles should not be permitted to travel in opposite directions on the same surface. For reasons of safety parkways preferably should have divided roadways for one-way traffic.
6. Parkways should be designed so as to incorporate beauty as well as efficiency. Consideration should be given to the appearance of all surface features. All structures should be designed in good proportion and with pleasing outlines. The incidental features of the roadside should be designed and located along the highway with respect to adjacent features so as to harmonize the construction with the surroundings.
7. The collaboration of landscape architect and engineer should be fundamental from the start of the planning to coordinate the design and construction of the various units of the work to fit present needs and future possible demands in an attractive manner. The width and form of the right of way reservation is governed by the local conditions and the topography. The conservation and preservation of natural scenery should be carefully considered.

8. The traffic lanes should be designed for the movement of traffic without interruption to travel by the parking of vehicles upon them. Space off the traveled way should be provided for the public safety and convenience together with any incidental service such as parking spaces, picnicking areas, overlooks, tables, benches, fire places, comfort facilities, etc.

9. A limited number of well-distributed entry points should be provided as a means for gaining access to adjoining districts or to the highway by the more or less local traffic that the highway serves. The buffer strips of land along each side of the roadway preclude any interference with the primary purpose of the parkway to provide rapid transportation service between main points. The protected right of way insures the investment of the public from the usual depreciating effect on heretofore initial highway values caused by the gradual but continuous entry of sporadic form of ribbon-like development strung out as so-called improvements along many of our important highways. Without this positive and definite land control, the once reasonably efficient and sometimes attractive highway becomes lined with disfigurements of the roadside, defeating the very purpose that the traffic artery was intended to serve.

CHAPTER V

SUITLAND PARKWAY

Suitland Parkway, which links Andrews Air Force Base with Washington, D.C., is one of the parkways that make up the network of entryways into the capitol. It has hosted both triumphal and mournful processions of public officials: from presidents returning from diplomatic achievements to the funeral procession of President John F. Kennedy.

Suitland Parkway came into existence during World War II to improve transportation for defense industry employees. It has provided many foreign dignitaries with their first glimpse of the nation's capital, albeit an inauspicious one with traffic delays caused by several at-grade crossings and stretches where only two lanes have been completed. Despite increased usage, it still remains essentially unfinished some 45 years after it officially opened.

DESCRIPTION

Suitland Parkway extends 9-1/2 miles from the end of the South Capitol Street bridge in the District of Columbia to the junction of Route 4 in Maryland (see map). Opened during World War II on December 9, 1944, the parkway culminated efforts by the Federal Works Agency/Public Roads Administration (Bureau of Public Roads, now the Federal Highway Administration), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCP & PC), and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Authorized as a national defense highway during World War II, the new road linked Bolling Field and Camp Springs Army Air Base. Eventually, these two military installations became Air Force bases, and the latter renamed Andrews Air Force Base in 1945.

In preceding years, land in the parkway corridor had been used in a variety of ways, but with the outbreak of World War II development increased. The war, however, caused the parkway project to languish. A newly established federal office complex at Suitland, Maryland, occupied a portion of the area and created the need for improving the local road system. Hostilities overseas required an improved defense network in the Washington, D.C., area prompting the construction of Camp Springs Army Air Base. The combination of these events led to construction of a parkway not envisioned in the McMillan Plan.

Since the war, commercial and residential development has mushroomed along the Suitland Parkway corridor. Such development in adjacent areas stretching toward Chesapeake Bay has placed a great

amount of traffic pressure on the parkway. Because portions of it have never been four lanes wide and several major at-grade intersections still exist, pressures for rehabilitation have grown stronger.

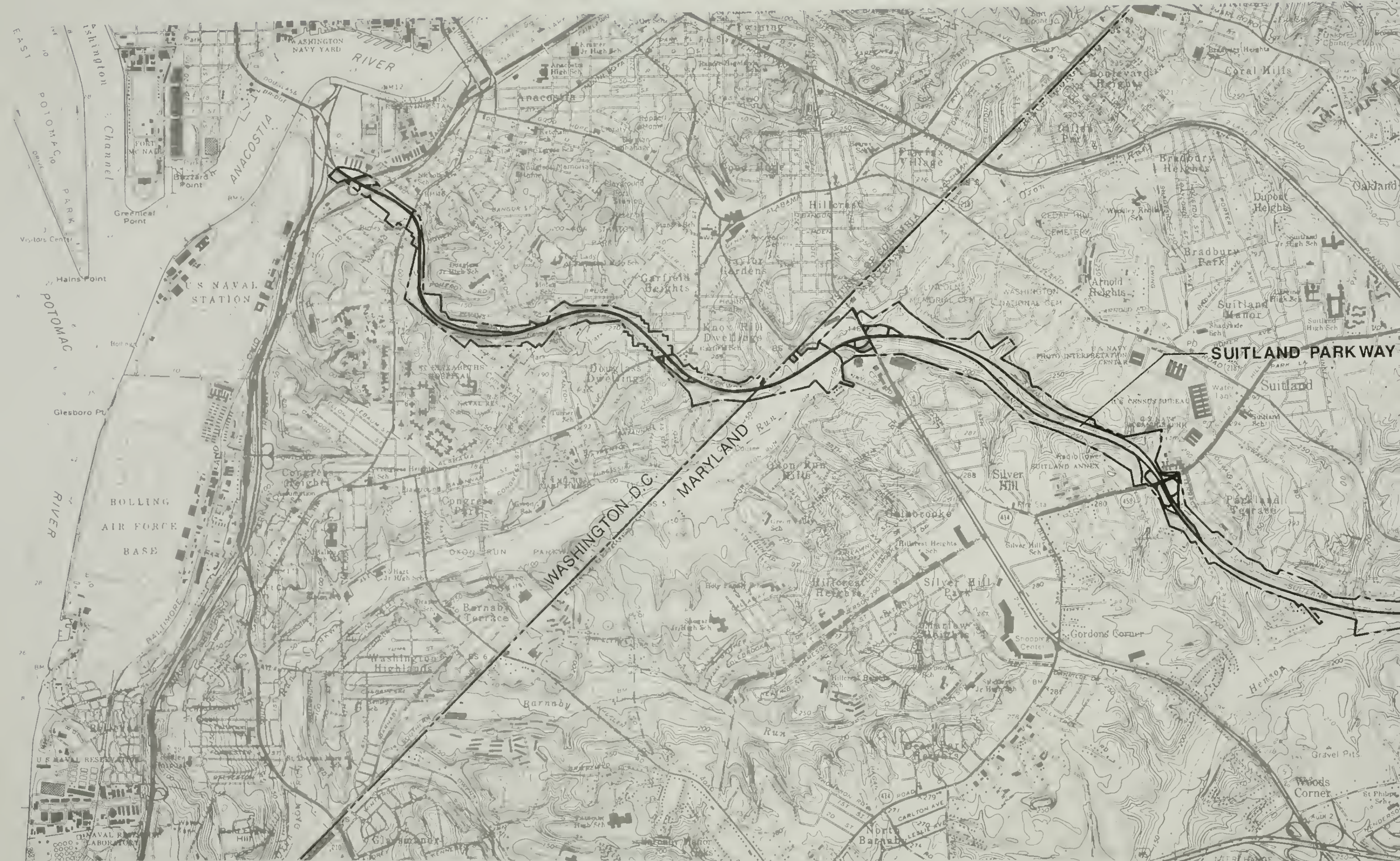
The National Park Service administers the Maryland portion of the parkway, and the District of Columbia administers that portion within the District. A major effort to improve the parkway is currently underway in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration.

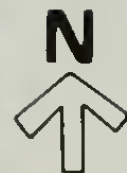
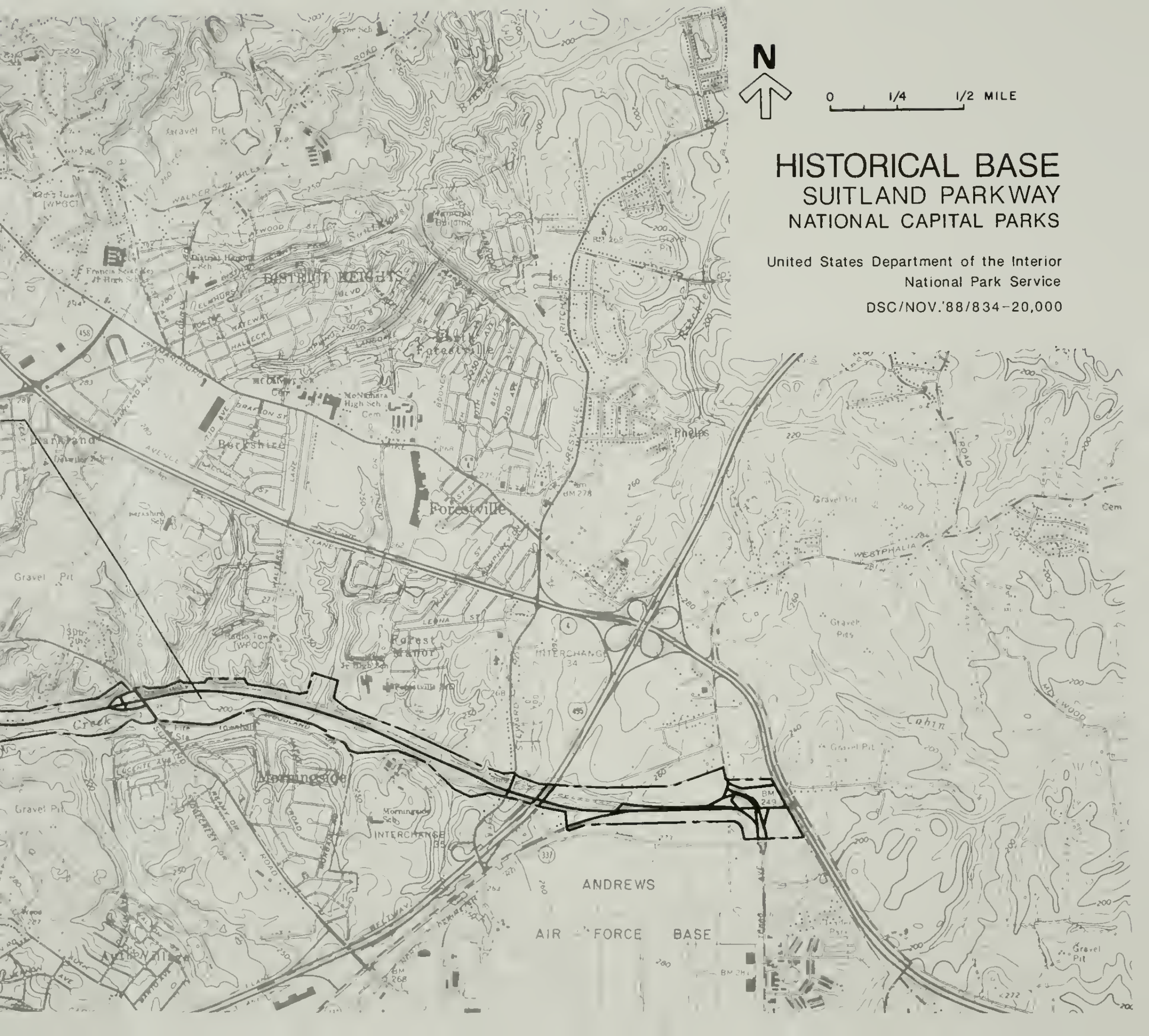
HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Suitland Parkway, one of several in the Washington, D.C., area, was conceived by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission as an appropriate entryway to the federal city. This parkway is a descendant of the parkways built earlier in the century in Westchester County, New York, and subsequently in Virginia, North Carolina, and Mississippi: Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Blue Ridge Parkway, and Natchez Trace Parkway. Unlike the forenamed, however, Suitland Parkway is principally a route of travel between federal installations: it connects Bolling Air Force Base and the District of Columbia to Andrews Air Force Base. Not originally conceived as a recreational drive, it falls on the parkway end of the continuum of parkway to freeway. Like Baltimore-Washington Parkway, Suitland Parkway represents a utilitarian roadway with design features intended to move traffic expeditiously, but with elements of design intended to convey a scenic driving experience characteristic of earlier parkways.

The Suitland Parkway, in conjunction with George Washington Memorial Parkway and Baltimore-Washington Parkway, should be included in the National Register of Historic Places. As a multiple-property nomination of national significance, it should be considered in criteria (A) transportation and (C) landscape architecture.

When the planners for the nation's capital promulgated the McMillan Plan in 1902, they advocated a system of roads and parkways consistent with L'Enfant's earlier design, including entryway to the capital commensurate with its stature. Suitland Parkway continues to serve that purpose as the entryway used by numerous foreign dignitaries arriving in the United States via Andrews Air Force Base. It provides a "dignified, protected, safe, and suitable approach for passenger vehicle traffic to the National Capital." The design concepts used on parkways throughout the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area





0 1/4 1/2 MILE

HISTORICAL BASE SUITLAND PARKWAY NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DSC/NOV.'88/834-20,000

are identifiable on Suitland Parkway too. Significant individuals, who were involved in several other parkways, incorporated the same design features in Suitland Parkway.

As with the other parkways in the Washington, D.C., area, Suitland Parkway is associated with key historical figures who played important roles in planning and design including Gilmore D. Clarke and Jay Downer, principal designers in the Westchester County and Virginia parkways. NCP & PC Chairman Frederick Delano and Thomas Jeffers of the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission had substantial roles in the origins of the parkway, especially when funding sources seemed exhausted because of the depression and World War II.

Though not 50 years old, the parkway merits significance under criteria (G) as a contributing element to the national capital park and parkway system developed during the first half of the 20th century. Suitland Parkway manifests integrity of topography, design, and architecture with bridges, culverts, and drainage installations.

HISTORY OF THE PARKWAY

As part of the effort to design and build parkways in the Washington, D.C., area the NCP & PC decided by 1937 to locate a parkway that would connect South Capitol Street with Bolling Field and Camp Springs Field. The planning commission agreed that Suitland Parkway would "be a dual highway with separate east and westbound two-lane traffic arteries."¹ Because of a lack of funding sources and the impending war, however, the plans did not materialize until 1943.

Designer T.C. Jeffers "submitted a preliminary study" for the parkway to the NCP & PC in early 1942, ostensibly to connect the building sites of the Suitland, Maryland, government offices with a new bridge proposed for South Capitol Street.² Jeffers' expressed rationales for building the road included a heavy concentration of government workers at Suitland and several defense housing projects in the area.³ Jay Downer of the Public Buildings Administration (former chief engineer of the Westchester County, New York, parkways) urged that Suitland Parkway extend westward from Naylor Road at the

1. *Washington Times-Herald*, December 17, 1944, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

2. National Capital Park and Planning Commission Meeting Minutes, January 15-16, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

3. Ibid.

District line and connect with South Capitol Street.⁴ He explained that utilities could be provided to the area, enabling development of more offices. In February 1942, the NCP & PC approved the staff recommendation for the project within the District of Columbia.⁵ The land acquired comprised 87.79 acres, which consisted of 425 lots, seven parcels, and 93 improvements with an assessed valuation of \$205,817.⁶

The commission then agreed to submit the request to the Public Buildings Administration as a desirable project. Furthermore, the land should be acquired under the auspices of the Capper-Cramton Act and the "Federal Works Agency [should] undertake construction of the road with Federal funds."⁷ Noted by the Commission was the parkway location relative to the site of the proposed Camp Springs airport. Funding to acquire the lands would be sought through a budget request for a supplementary appropriation.⁸ Frederic A. Delano, chairman of the NCP & PC, sent the request for support to the commissioner of the Public Buildings Administration in late February. In it he emphasized how the planning commission "revived a proposal considered some years ago for a parkway extending from the proposed South Capitol Street Bridge, up the valley of Stickfoot Creek, through the Barry Farm area, to Suitland, with possible further extension to Camp Springs."⁹

Delano added that the land chosen for acquisition seemed "ideally suited for a grade-separated parkway of high design standards."¹⁰ Though he reiterated the assessed value noted above, he estimated the actual cost of acquisition at somewhere between \$400,000 and \$500,000. The first response came from J.C. Nichols, Kansas City real estate developer and member of the Public Buildings Administration. Nichols believed the idea had much merit but sought a delay until Public Buildings Commissioner W.E. Reynolds could be consulted.¹¹ In March 1942, the NCP & PC received an unqualified endorsement of the parkway from Reynolds who emphasized the access it provided to the Suitland area

4. Ibid.

5. National Capital Park and Planning Commission Meeting Minutes, February 19-20, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

6. Jeffers to Nolen, February 27, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

7. National Capital Park and Planning Commission Meeting Minutes, February 19-20, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

8. Ibid.

9. Delano to Reynolds, February 27, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

10. Ibid.

11. Nichols to Delano, March 2, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

and the connection with Camp Springs airport.¹² He questioned whether the federal government could fund it and stated that arrangements for construction were underway with the Public Roads Administration on the portion from Silver Hill to Suitland.¹³ In addition, he asked the commission to fund the right-of-way in the District. Reynolds also opened communication with representatives of the Army Air Corps regarding a road to Camp Springs.¹⁴ The planning commission unanimously passed a motion that Suitland Parkway be added "to its comprehensive plan for the park, parkway and playground system of the National Capital."¹⁵ This eastern portal represented a significant addition to the plan for parkways in the Washington, D.C., area. And once the concept obtained approval, construction began almost immediately.

In May 1942, the planning commission requested \$600,000 from the Bureau of the Budget for acquisition of land for Suitland Parkway. Land appraisers had arrived at this amount, which only pertained to land in the District. Land outside District boundaries would be acquired by the Public Buildings Administration.¹⁶ Chairman Delano underscored that the recommendations for the parkway emanated from Jay Downer and Gilmore Clark, consultants to the Public Buildings Administration on matters regarding "more adequate highway facilities between Suitland and downtown Washington."¹⁷ Delano emphasized the need for acting quickly because land development underway was driving up land values.

During the summer of 1942, Public Roads Administration Engineer H.J. Spelman estimated the costs for the area from the end of the bridge on South Capitol Street to the District line, with a special notation of the need to cross the railroad tracks.¹⁸

12. Reynolds to Delano, March 18, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. National Capital Park and Planning Commission Meeting Minutes, March 19-20, 1942, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

16. Smith to Delano, May 22, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

17. Ibid.

18. Spelman to Vint, June 11, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

Grading	\$300,000
Drainage	100,000
Concrete pavement	300,000
Landscaping and erosion control	60,000
Miscellaneous items	40,000
Engineering landscape and contingencies	120,000
Total road items	\$920,000
Total bridge items	\$1,285,000
Total for both	\$2,205,000

Spelman went on to calculate the length of the road to be 2.8 miles and the pavement estimated to include two 24-foot roadways.

Supportive letters urged action from the Bureau of the Budget, though the commissioners of the District thought the federal government should fund it and not use monies from the Capper-Cramton Act. District officials thought benefits would accrue to the federal government with the offices located at Suitland and the Camp Springs facility on east; they were not persuaded by arguments that a tax base improvement for the District would result from the development of southeast Washington, D.C.

During August 1942, the issue continued to be raised at planning commission meetings. As for Baltimore-Washington Parkway, participants noted the possibility of getting "some government agency to certify that this is a war necessity," so that funding for the portion beyond the district line would be covered.¹⁹ Construction of the South Capitol Street bridge hindered declaration of the parkway as a war necessity. Word arrived later in August that the secretary of war had approved Camp Springs for a new airport.²⁰ A strategy to fund the parkway now seemed apparent: persuade the president to include the road right-of-way in the purchase of land for the new airport.²¹ This idea originated with

19. National Capital Park and Planning Commission Meeting Minutes, August 13-14, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

20. Nolen to Delano, August 17, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

21. Ibid.

Brig. Gen. Thomas M. Robins and received the endorsement of Brig. Gen. John J. Kingman.²² Quickly the strategy took form when President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote the secretary of war:

In connection with the installation of an army air base camp at Camp Springs Meadows, you are directed to acquire the necessary land for the proposed installation at Camp Springs including the right of way for a suitable access road from the Camp Springs site via the contemplated Suitland Parkway route to Bolling Field or an alternate route. This road upon completion of the South Capitol Street Bridge will afford quick access to the city of Washington, not only from the Camp Springs airfield but also from the Federal buildings and the Suitland area.²³

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers designated Col. J.J. O'Brien, chief of real estate branch, as land acquisition officer for the new parkway. By early September, he had approached the NCP & PC for detailed maps of the land to be acquired.²⁴ President Roosevelt "allocated \$6,000,000 for acquisition and construction of Camp Springs Airport, including Suitland Parkway and its extension to Camp Springs."²⁵ Commission minutes reveal a sensitivity to evicting occupants of properties. Brig. Gen. U.S. Grant III asked that the War Department not evict anyone until the property was needed because housing shortages existed, in particular for "people of small incomes."²⁶ District officials submitted plans and accompanying documents in late September for use by the Office of the Chief of Engineers. Plans for the Maryland portion received priority attention, followed by the portion from the District line to the Suitland office buildings, and then by the last section to Camp Springs.

A reluctant War Department, despite the directive of the president, delayed purchasing right-of-way and instead pressed the Public Roads Administration to acquire it.²⁷ The National Defense Highway Act of 1941 lacked clarity, and even the Public Roads Administration seemed hesitant. After an exchange of correspondence, Commission Chairman Delano, in a strongly worded letter, appealed to the War Department for interpretation of the Highway Act and the seeming need for a roadway connecting the various government installations along the parkway corridor. Action, however, was not forthcoming until the summer of 1943. Prompting action then was a coordinating committee from the NCP & PC and a considerable lobbying effort by the many parties interested in the proposed parkway.

22. Ibid.

23. Roosevelt to Secretary of War, August 25, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

24. Settle to Nolen, September 5, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

25. Demaray to Director, September 11, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2835.

26. National Capital Park and Planning Commission Meeting Minutes, September 17-18, 1942, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

27. Nolen to Grant, October 21, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

An important result of the effort consisted of reasons for the parkway. Advocates pointed to the lack of suitable roads and justification that the road would "serve nine war housing projects immediately adjacent totalling 4000 units, of which more than 3200 are family dwellings."²⁸ Buildings already in use at Suitland included the Hydrographic Office of the Navy and the Bureau of the Census. Supporters reported the lengths of various sections:²⁹

S. Capitol St. Bridge to D.C. Line	2.9 miles
D.C. Line to Suitland Building Area	1.3
Through Suitland Building Area to Silver Hill Road	.8
Silver Hill Road To Camp Springs Entrance	4.1

During the first half of 1943, a coordinating committee was established to resolve differences on funding land acquisition and on various other matters. A complication arising in the land purchases phase stated "that a number of the owners of improved properties have refused to sign leases and others have stated that they do not see why they need to sell their property now when no construction is contemplated."³⁰ This, of course, complicated the issue of land acquisition for defense purposes. The logjam could only be broken by President Roosevelt. That occurred in July when a directive from the acting secretary of war informed the commanding general of the army service forces to proceed with construction of a military highway on the parkway route.³¹ Various officials from District, state, and federal agencies and the planning commission met in early August to "consider recommended action on street closings, highway changes, land transfers, standards of construction, grade separation widths and clearances, and other details of design and construction."³² The chief of engineers, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, delegated matters of land acquisition, planning, and easements to the District Engineer Col. Clarence Renshaw.³³ The same letter spoke of construction having been authorized between the District and Camp Springs.

Lead for parkway design and construction fell to the Public Road Administration, in close coordination with the District of Columbia engineer, NCP & PC, National Park Service, Commission of Fine Arts, and relevant Maryland authorities. For example, the National Park Service/National Capital Parks had

28. Grant to Somervell, December 12, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

29. Nolen to Grant, December 28, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100. Summary data for the proposed parkway is located in Appendix A and B.

30. Demaray to Grant, July 21, 1943, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

31. Nolen to Grant, July 31, 1943, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

32. Ibid.

33. Renshaw to Demaray, August 18, 1943, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

responsibility for designing five major bridges along the parkway, but these designs had to be approved, particularly by the Commission of Fine Arts.³⁴ Likewise, authorities communicated on issues such as placing utility lines underground (NCP & PC policy) or aboveground; however, all agreed to place them underground after the war, and upon completion of the parkway.³⁵

After all the preliminaries had been completed, construction of the parkway commenced on September 27, 1943. A rather remarkable set of conditions had led to this point, following the initial presidential direction of August 1942. The NCP & PC had conceptualized a parkway layout and then the division engineer of the Public Roads Administration prepared drawings showing the land needed from the District boundary to Camp Springs. The making of topographic surveys and maps from these drawings began in September.³⁶ The maps were then used by the commission to establish taking lines for right-of-way. This information formed the basis of a detailed survey made by the U.S. engineers supervised by the District Engineer's office.³⁷ The Real Estate Branch of the War Department completed the land acquisition phase for the parkway project.

The request to begin construction came to the administrator of the Federal Works Agency from the Secretary of War. Actual responsibility for the work was delegated to the Public Roads Administration which assigned it to division 15.³⁸ All would be reviewed by the planning commission, by the Fine Arts Commission, and by the National Park Service, the ultimate manager, when it no longer was deemed necessary as a defense highway. The request specified,

that the construction should include the grading, drainage and structures necessary to provide for an ultimate four-lane divided highway but to construct only one two-lane pavement strip at this time; that grade separations be constructed where necessary but it was contemplated they would be needed at Nichols Avenue and Alabama Avenue in the District of Columbia, and at Branch Avenue, Suitland-Silver Hill Road and the Camp Springs Air Base entrance to Prince George's County, Maryland.³⁹

34. Thompson to Clarke, August 27, 1943, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

35. Nolen to Peters, November 9, 1943; Nolen to Peters, November 27, 1943; both in National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

36. "Military Highway Part I," *Federal Works Agency Public Roads Administration, FINAL CONSTRUCTION REPORT MILITARY HIGHWAY, From Bolling Field In The District Of Columbia To Camp Springs Army Air Base In Prince Georges County Maryland, Part I Grading and Drainage*, January 1946. Federal Highway Administration Files, Arlington, Virginia, p. 11. (Hereafter cited as, *FINAL CONSTRUCTION REPORT*).

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., p. 12.

39. Ibid.

For construction purposes management divided the length of the parkway into four sections, A, B, C, and D (see Appendixes C and D). The roadway surface proper varied to some extent by section. From Firth Sterling Avenue to just east of the Nichols Avenue bridge, bituminous surfacing covered the roadway, no curbs were added, and the width varied between 24 and 36 feet.⁴⁰ This design would accommodate the eventual construction of the South Capitol Street bridge over the Anacostia River. Extending from Nichols Avenue to the north entrance of Camp Springs (Andrews Air Base), the road surface consisted of reinforced concrete 25 feet wide and 9 inches thick.⁴¹ A parkway-type curb added to this section measured 3 inches high and 6 inches wide, uncolored, to contrast with the darkened concrete road surface.⁴²

The entire length of Suitland Parkway opened in mid-December 1944, although short sections saw some use earlier in the fall. The planners from both the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the NCP & PC intended for the parkway to eventually extend all the way to Chesapeake Bay; numerous residents of the Washington, D.C., area traveled to the shore for recreational purposes. Not only would the parkway enhance movement near the District but it would facilitate transportation to outlying areas – a "definite asset" according to planners. The expenditure of approximately \$3.6 million for the parkway would have been augmented by an estimated \$55 million for the extension. Upon the opening of the parkway in 1944, management of the parkway became the responsibility of Capital Parks. This arrangement began with an agreement between the Department of the Interior and the Department of the Army. It became secure when the parkway became surplus property in the late 1940s.

Legislation

During World War II, the War Department considered the parkway connecting Bolling Field and Camp Springs to be of inestimable value for defense purposes.⁴³ As one official indicated, the creation of Suitland Parkway was predicated on the strategic importance of establishing "an airfield of major

40. "Military Highway Introduction," *FINAL CONSTRUCTION REPORT PART III*, p. 6.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*

43. National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2835. Records of the National Park Service. National Capital Park and Planning Commission, "House of Representatives Hearings before the Committee on Public Works," April 11, 1949, pp. 3-4, 21; U.S. Congress, House, *Providing for the Development, Administration, and Maintenance of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway and the Suitland Parkway in the State of Maryland as an Extension of the Park System, of the District of Columbia and Its Environs by the Secretary of the Interior*, H. Rept. No. 767, 81st Cong., 1st sess., 1949, pp. 1-6; U.S. Congress, Senate, *Providing for the Development, Administration, and Maintenance of the Suitland Parkway in the State of Maryland as an Extension of the Park System of the District of Columbia and Its Environs by the Secretary of the Interior*. S. Rept. No. 747, 81st Cong., 1st sess., 1949, pp. 1-2; U.S., *Statutes at Large*, LXIII, pp. 612-13.

proportion to protect the Atlantic Coast during the early stage of the war."⁴⁴ After the war, the War Department proclaimed Suitland Parkway surplus to defense needs and burdensome to maintain. In other respects, however, the road was considered important because of the increasing government work force at Suitland. In fact, the service to federal employees living near the parkway and the parallel desire to control the density of government workers in downtown Washington, D.C., became the principal reasons that the route was considered a regular component of the federal highway system. Further, the parkway was viewed as providing one of several major radial arteries bringing general traffic into Washington, D.C. It was determined that the parkway could best be administered by the Department of the Interior under the auspices of the National Park Service, and temporary provisions for this were arranged.

In 1949, legislation was introduced for the permanent transfer of the parkway along with "all [its] lands and easements heretofore or hereafter acquired by the United States." Backed by such offices as the Federal Works Agency, the Department of the Army, the War Assets Administration (which held jurisdiction over the surplus property), and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, H.R. 2214 passed Congress on August 17, 1949.⁴⁵ This law specified that the parkway be "developed, operated, and administered as a limited access road primarily to provide a dignified, protected, safe, and suitable approach for passenger-vehicle traffic to the National Capital and for an uninterrupted means of access between the several Federal establishments adjacent thereto and the seat of government in the District of Columbia."⁴⁶

Design

Some design information about Suitland Parkway exists in archival holdings. A few documents reveal generic parkway design information: design concepts, some particular design features, and other data on the parkway (see Appendix A).

Design information taken from other sources and applied to parkways also was used on Suitland Parkway. Many highway engineers looked to the success of railroads for such concepts as "limited access separated as to direction, and scheduled for fast express and slow-moving freight."⁴⁷ As applied

44. National Archives, Record Group 79, Hearings, April 11, 1949, p. 45.

45. National Archives, Record Group 79, Hearings, April 11, 1949, pp. 18-20, 42-43, 49; H. Rept. No. 767, pp. 1-6; No. 747, pp. 1-2.

46. U.S., *Statutes at Large*, LXIII, p. 613.

47. *Washington Star*, June 5, 1938, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

to highways, the parkway concepts evolved to the design of American freeways. Baseline design concepts appeared in legal expression:

the term parkway has been pretty definitely tied down by legal definition as "an attenuated park with a road through it." Three characteristics determine a parkway: (1) linear form, (2) a road through it, (3) no right of light or air or access to abutting property.⁴⁸

In the same newspaper article, Gilmore D. Clarke underscored many design elements to educate the public.⁴⁹ The more important elements called attention to limited access, controlled right-of-way, absence of at-grade crossings, entrances, exits on the "right-hand" side, and divided roadways.⁵⁰ Clarke urged that beauty and efficiency be the primary considerations as highway engineer and landscape architect closely collaborate; that roadsides and structures harmonize with the environment and topography; and that parking spaces for those desiring to stop be provided but away from traffic.⁵¹ Several design features specific to Suitland Parkway can be identified; however, detailed information remains scarce.

When the parkway opened, it was graded for two lanes in each direction, but costs prevented surfacing all lanes. Only one 24-foot-wide roadway was opened with an adjacent median that varied in width from 6 to 200 feet along the 9-1/2 mile length.

A design speed of 55-60 miles per hour permitted motorists to travel the length of the parkway and over or under five grade separations without major delays. Curve design and cloverleafs permitted a steady driving pace.⁵² According to planners and local boosters, the road would eventually extend to the beaches of Chesapeake Bay, though it never did.

Bridge design was assigned to the Office of Chief of Planning, National Capital Parks, in Washington, D.C. Chief Harry T. Thompson clarified the role of his office, particularly review procedures, with Gilmore Clarke in the summer of 1943. He pointed out that his staff is "now designing five major

48. National Capital Park and Planning Commission, "Comments on Report of Maryland State Planning Commission on State Recreational Areas," unpublished 1938?, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

49. *Washington Star*, June 5, 1938, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

52. Washington D.C., *Times-Herald*, December 17, 1944, clippings file, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100. Hereafter referred to as *Times-Herald*.

bridge structures which should be cleared by the National Commission of Fine Arts."⁵³ Concrete arch bridges with stone facing and generous parapets closely followed designs initially used on the Westchester parkways and subsequently on Mount Vernon Memorial Highway and on Blue Ridge Parkway.

Of related interest was the concern for safety and flow of traffic. Eighteen grade separation structures made the "tentative" listing for the parkway alignment (see Appendix E). Thomas C. Jeffers, landscape architect for the NCP & PC, urged that certain structures be incorporated into the first phase of construction, but that others be delayed until paving of the second set of lanes.⁵⁴ The structures to be delayed included those at Fort Drive, South Capitol Street, Sheridan-Sumner Road, Stanton Road, and the federal building area at Suitland.⁵⁵

Design considerations included the recommendation that utility lines be placed underground, "but . . . because this would require the use of critical materials, there would be no objection to [temporary] overhead crossings, provided conduits are installed for future use under the improved roadway sections and where needed through structures."⁵⁶ The planning commission passed a motion incorporating this recommendation at its November meeting. Ultimately after the war, the new managers would place the lines underground. Immediately agreeing to the arrangement, the telephone company placed their lines underground, whereas the power company refused to do so even though facilities existed for such placement.

Landscaping along the parkway corridor commanded attention from the beginning. Journalists reporting the opening noted how the scenery was enhanced because larger trees were left standing in the medians, grass was planted after topsoil dressing on cuts and fills, and developments were screened where necessary to present a rural-like setting.⁵⁷ In March 1944, key decision-makers established several important landscaping standards. Public Roads Administration and the National Capital Parks officials agreed that guardrails would be "a type of wood post and rail similar to the 'Mass. Avenue Rail,' and be completed by the Roads Administration."⁵⁸ Also determined was placing conduits at the

53. Thompson to Clarke, August 27, 1943, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

54. Jeffers to Nolen memorandum, August 2, 1943, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

55. Ibid.

56. Nolen to Peters, November 9, 1943, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

57. *Washington Star*, date unknown, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100.

58. Memorandum by Breeze, March 3, 1944, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 545/100. Benjamin L. Breeze was Resident Landscape Architect for the National Park Service/National Capital Parks.

"throat" of each turn-off road and coloring concrete with "one pound of lamp-black to a sack of cement."⁵⁹

Topsoil recommendations specified that 4 inches be placed on the cut and fill slopes outside the paved lanes and in the median, but not on the uncompleted lanes. Seeding would be done in the fall of 1944, and the uncompleted lanes would be seeded with Italian rye.⁶⁰ All slopes steeper than 2:1 and "field inlets and drainage approaches" were to be sodded.⁶¹ The final recommendation stated the uncompleted lanes would be "made available as a horse trail on an experimental basis to determine if horse trails were in sufficient demand to warrant further consideration."⁶² Unfortunately some original design features are hidden under asphalt applied in the early 1970s.

Anticipating today's use of the parkway, reports circulated indicating that the road might become a way for travelers from "Europe, South America and the Orient," to reach the District from an airport that indeed may surpass "National Airport on the Potomac at Gravelly Point."⁶³

Like other parkways, Suitland Parkway incorporated design elements from the Westchester County parkways, even though it was intended as a defense highway. Designers also integrated roadway, bridge, inlet, and drainage elements from other nearby parkways. Once the decision to proceed was finally made, several government agencies and commissions, demonstrating rather remarkable cooperation, managed the planning, design, and construction phases.

Suitland Parkway provided an entryway befitting Washington, D.C., much as Mount Vernon Memorial Highway (George Washington Memorial Parkway) did before it. Foreign dignitaries arriving at Andrews Air Force Base continue to travel Suitland Parkway into the capital although it remains unfinished. Suitland Parkway stands with Baltimore-Washington Parkway as a project whose time for completion is due.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. *Times-Herald*.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Land Acquisition Data for the Suitland Parkway

REMAINDER ADDRESS
907 CALVERT BUILDING

OFFICE OF THE DIVISION ENGINEER
MIDDLE ATLANTIC DIVISION
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND -2

FILE 601.1 (Suitland Parkway Military
Highway) MADRE-5

4 April 1944

Mr. Norman C. Brown
Land Purchasing Officer
National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Interior Building
Washington -25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Brown:

In accordance with request made in your letter of 25 February 1944, the following information, pertaining to land acquisition for the portion of the Suitland Parkway Military Highway located within the District of Columbia, is submitted.

a. Total area acquired in District of Columbia	172.186 acres
b. Total number of tracts in District of Columbia area	341 141
c. Total area acquired from other Government Agencies by transfer or use permits	64.933 acres
d. Total number of tracts acquired from other Government Agencies by transfer or use permits	6
e. Total area of one (1) remaining tract to be acquired from Government Agency	.716 acres
f. Total number of tracts purchased	94
Total Cost	\$188,045.00
g. Total area of tracts purchased	25.1327 acres
h. Total number of tracts condemned	240
i. Total area of tracts condemned	81.405 acres
j. Total condemnation awards	\$118,219.71
k. Grand Total of Cost to Date	\$306,264.71

Appeals involving three tracts situated in the District Area are pending in the U. S. District Court for the District of Columbia, Cause No. 2858, and some revision in the above cost figures may later be required.

APPENDIX B

Land Acquisition Data for the Suitland Parkway.

NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Camp Springs-Meadows Airbase Access Parkway

March 22, 1943.

Summary

<u>Section</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Area in Taking</u>	<u>Average Area Per Mile</u>
1. S. Capitol St. Bridgehead to D.C. Line	2.6 Mi.	106.3 ± Ac.	40.9 Ac.
2. D.C. Line to Suitland Building Area	1.25 "	126.93 [±] Ac.	101.5 Ac.
3. Through Suitland Building Area	0.8 "	60.0 ± Ac. (US)	75.0 Ac.
4. Suitland Building Area to Mayhew Road	1.8 "	127.2 ± Ac.	70.6 Ac.
5. Mayhew Road to Marlboro Road (Relocated)	<u>2.55 "</u>	<u>172.8 ± Ac.</u>	<u>67.8 Ac.</u>
Total Approved	9.0 Mi.	593.23 [±] Ac.	65.9 Ac.
6. Branch to Brandywine Road (Route 5)	<u>1.1 Mi.</u>	<u>52.0 ± Ac.</u>	<u>47.3 Ac.</u>
Total - Complete Project	10.1 Mi.	645.23 Ac.	63.9 Ac.

APPENDIX C

Proposed Schedule of Grading Projects for the Suitland Parkway.

A proposed schedule of plan completion, advertising, award of contract, and completion of projects was set up on August 23, 1943 for the grading and drainage projects, one project for each section; and for two paving projects, which would provide for the paving from the end of Firth Sterling Avenue to the entrance house at Camp Springs. This schedule was as follows: (The lower dates indicate actual performance).

Grading Projects Schedule

Project No.	Limits	Plans sent to War.Dept,	Project Advertised	Contract Awarded	Notice to Proceed	Con- struction Completed
C-1	Branch Avenue-Mayhew Road	9/8/43 9/1/43	9/15/43 9/2/43	10/7/43 9/20/43	10/14/43 9/21/43	5/15/44 7/24/44
D-1	Mayhew Road-Camp Springs	9/17/43 9/11/43	9/24/43 9/11/43	10/15/43 9/30/43	10/22/43 9/30/43	5/22/44 10/14/44 *
B-1	Fort Drive-Branch Ave.	10/8/43 10/2/43	10/15/43 10/2/43	11/7/43 10/18/43	11/15/43 10/18/43	6/15/44 10/11/44**
A-1	Nichols Ave.-Fort Drive	10/22/43 10/18/43	10/30/43 10/18/43	11/20/43 11/4/43	11/27/43 11/10/43	7/1/44 4/24/44

* Delayed due to revision of plan.

** Delayed due to storm damages.

Paving Projects Schedule

A4-B4-C4	Firth Sterling Ave.- Suitland-Silver Hill Rd.	3/1/44 3/8/44	3/7/44 3/8/44	4/1/44 3/29/44	4/15/44 4/20/44	11/30/44 12/15/44
C5-D5	Suitland-Silver Hill Rd.- Camp Springs	3/15/44 3/24/44	3/22/44 4/3/44	4/15/44 4/27/44	5/1/44 5/19/44	12/1 12/15/44

APPENDIX D

Proposed Schedule of Bridge Projects for the Suitland Parkway.

SURVEYS AND PLANS

A schedule for bridges was also set up as follows: (The lower dates indicate actual performance).

Project No.	Bridge	Plans sent to War Dept.	Project Advertised	Contract Awarded	Notice to Proceed	Construction Completed
C-2	Suitland-Silver Hill Road	9/23/43 9/17/43	10/1/43 9/17/43	10/21/43 10/7/43	11/1/43 10/7/43	7/1/44 5/2/44
C-3	Branch Avenue	10/7/43 10/8/43	10/10/43 10/8/43	11/7/43 10/21/43	11/15/43 10/23/43	7/15/44 6/10/44
B-2	Alabama Avenue	10/23/43 10/11/43	10/31/43 10/12/43	11/21/43 10/25/43	12/1/43 10/30/43	7/31/44 7/24/44
A-2	Nichols Avenue	11/7/43 11/2/43	11/15/43 11/2/43	12/7/43 11/26/43	12/15/43 11/26/43	8/15/44 10/15/44 *
D-2	Mayhew Road	11/23/43 11/20/43	12/1/43 11/20/43	12/21/43 12/13/43	12/31/43 12/13/43	8/31/44 8/30/44
Not Scheduled at this time						
D-3	Camp Springs	1/7/44	1/8/44	1/28/44	1/31/44	11/27/44

* Delayed due to difficulty in securing materials.

POST CONSTRUCTION INCLUDING MAINTENANCE

Maintenance

Subsequent to the completion of construction operations December 15, 1944, the Public Roads Administration maintained the Military Highway until March 15, 1945 at which time the War Department entered into agreement with the National Park Service to do this maintenance. At that time the National Park Service requested the Public Roads Administration to maintain the pavement, shoulders and drainage structures on a reimbursable basis.

APPENDIX E

Schedule of Grade Separation Structures for the Suitland Parkway.

NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Suitland Parkway

Schedule for Grade Separation Structures

(Tentative)

July 30, 1943

No.	Location	Parkway Passes	Normal or Skew	Suggested Type of Structure	Span	Width of Deck
1	S.Capitol St. (N.Bound)	Over	- 661' Curve	Stone faced arch	45' ±	30'
2	Firth Sterling Ave.	Under	Skew	" " "	64'	42'
3	B.& O. R.R.(Double track)	Under	Skew	" " "	64'	33'
4	Nichols Ave.	Under	Skew	" " "	64'	54'
5	Summer Road	Under	850' Curve	" " "	182' ± (2 spans)	38'
6	Stanton Road	Under	Skew	" " "	70' ±	42'
7	Port Drive (Future)	Under	1600' Curve	" " "	190' ±	56'
8	Alabama Ave.	Under	Skew	" " "	90'	64'
9	Glen Run Parkway (Future)	Under	Skew	" " "	76'	50'
10	Maylar Road (Relocated)	Under	1500' Curve	" " "	76'	52'
11	Branch Ave.	Over	1910' Curve	Steel Arch Girder	70'	62'
12	Hdg. Area Approach Road	Under	Spiral Curve	Stone faced arch	50'	30'
13	Silver Hill Road	Under	1600' Curve	" " "	100'	56'
14	Branch to S.Mi.Rd.(Future)	Over	4500' Curve(Skew)	" " "	50'	40'
15	Mayhew Road	Over	Slight Skew	Steel arch girder	60'	68'
16	Old Marlboro Road)N.Bound	Over	(Curve one side)	" " "	70'	30' ±
17	2 Separate Bridges)E.Bound	Over	Slight Skew (2 Separate arches)	" " " " " "	70' 44'	30' 30'
18	New Marlboro Rd.S.Bound Lane	Under	Curve (Skew)	Stone faced arch	50'	34'

Thomas G. Jeffers
Landscape Architect.

CHAPTER VI

BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON PARKWAY

A ribbon of concrete between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., is the final parkway included in this resource study. the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, is closer to the freeway end of the continuum than to the parkway end. This high-speed route initially served as an improved road that gave motorists a safer, less congested link between the cities and the federal installations scattered along it. Today it is a heavily used route carrying traffic at very high speeds along a megalopolitan corridor.

DESCRIPTION

Running between the eastern boundary of the District of Columbia and Baltimore, the Baltimore-Washington Parkway is a 29-mile route that opened for traffic in October 1954. It resulted from the combined efforts of federal and state governments. This cooperation linked the two metropolitan areas along the "fall line" where the Atlantic coastal plain meets the Piedmont region.

Initially, the parkway crossed undeveloped land. Since then, considerable suburban growth, stimulated in part by the roadway, has occurred on either end. In the middle and on the southern end, the parkway serves a number of federal properties, including the United States Department of Agriculture Beltsville facility, Greenbelt Park, and Fort Meade. At each interchange a considerable amount of commercial development now exists, and adjacent to the corridor many residential subdivisions have been built. In short, the roadway has many demands placed on it by through and commuter traffic, and – lying as it does on the most direct route between two metropolitan areas – by the continuous development nearby.

At present, the National Park Service manages the 19-mile section from Fort Meade to the District boundary (see map). This section originated with the National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and was designed and built by the Bureau of Public Roads. The remaining 10-mile section from Fort Meade to Baltimore evolved from efforts by the state of Maryland, in cooperation with the Bureau of Public Roads. During the last 20 years, numerous efforts have been made to designate an agency to administer the entire parkway; the National Park Service has sought to turn responsibility over to the state of Maryland. Several of the decisions assigning this responsibility have been reversed as situations changed. In the meantime critical needs for maintenance and improvement were identified as use increased, and rehabilitation plans are currently underway.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Baltimore-Washington Parkway merits state and local significance under criteria (A) transportation and (C) landscape architecture. This 29-mile-long parkway between Washington, D.C., and Baltimore opened in October 1954. The first 19 miles to Jessup Road from Washington, D.C., was constructed by the Bureau of Public Roads, and the last 10 miles by the state of Maryland. Among parkways, it falls on the freeway end of the continuum. Its antecedents date it back to the 1920s. Originally, the rationale for the parkway was to provide a scenic entry to the federal city – a preferable alternative to the billboard-choked Route 1 (Baltimore Boulevard) corridor.

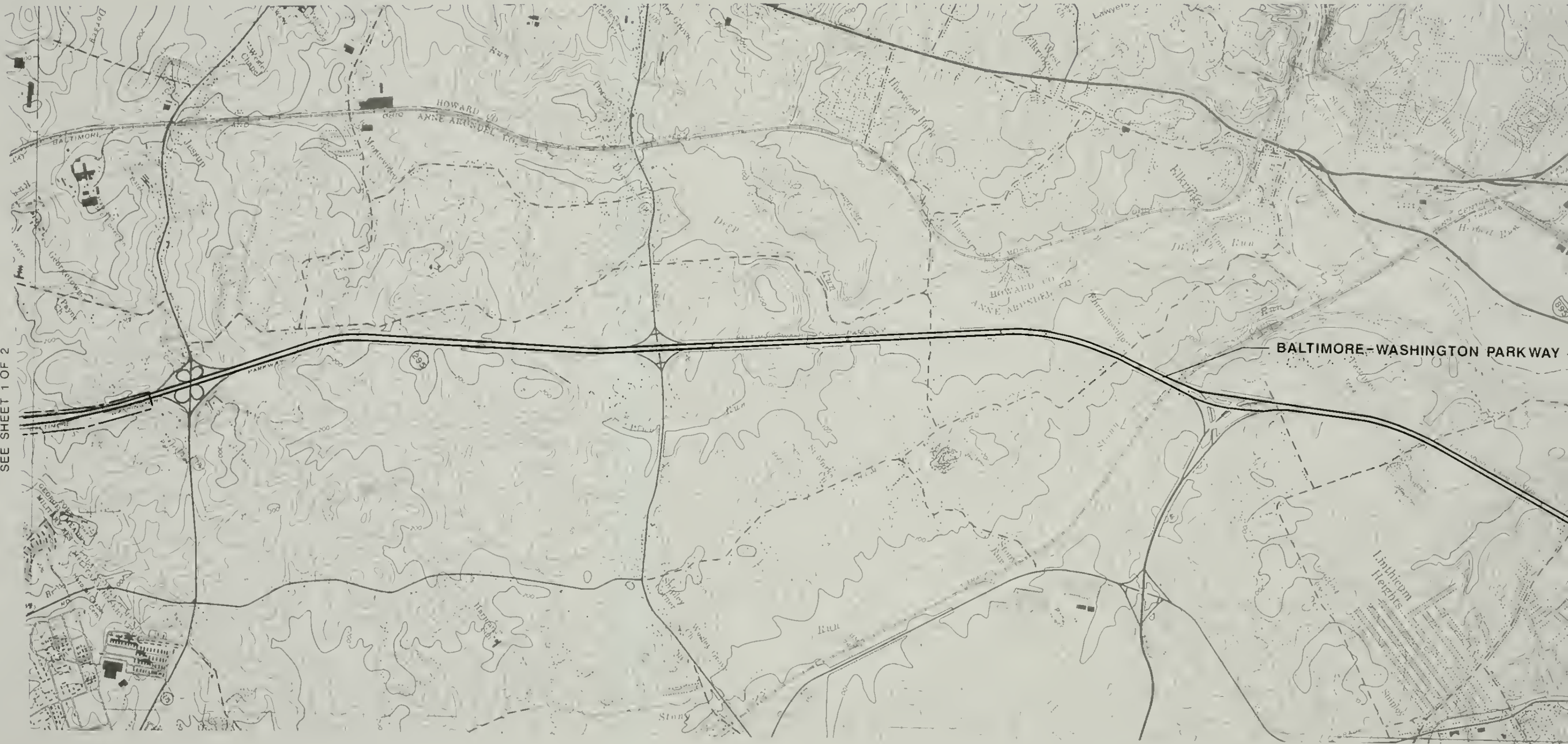
Closely associated with the planning and design of the parkway were Jay Downer and Gilmore D. Clarke, who were also instrumental in Westchester County, New York, parkways, Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Blue Ridge Parkway, and various other Washington, D.C., area landscape design projects. Downer headed the Bronx River Parkway Commission, Clarke consulted on several parkways, served as Dean of Cornell's College of Architecture, and chaired the Commission of Fine Arts in Washington, D.C. Clarke contributed directly to the parkway as manager of the land-use studies predating the design and construction phases. Thomas C. Jeffers, another key contributor, assumed a major role in the completion of the parkway. He served as principal landscape architect for the parkway system of Washington, D.C., and was an influential member of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

Baltimore-Washington Parkway is associated with urban development of the national capital as a federal center, and exemplifies one of the last such roads constructed. It is the only fully developed parkway of its kind in Maryland. Because of its association with the network of Washington, D.C., parkways begun early in the 20th century, it has extraordinary significance under criteria (G) as a contributing element, even though it is less than 50 years old.

Legislation establishing the parkway supports its national significance as part of the park and parkway system of the capital; a formal entryway to Washington, D.C.; a route connecting federal installations in the Washington area; and a catalyst for residential and commercial development in the corridor between the two cities.

It is a transitional roadway clearly bridging early parkway concepts with those of later freeways and interstate highways. As such, it maintains the integrity of the setting, and its design preserves the natural topography.

SEE SHEET 1 OF 2





HISTORICAL BASE BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON PARKWAY NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
DSC/NOV'88/842-20.001





BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON PARKWAY

HISTORY OF THE PARKWAY

The parkways in the Washington, D.C., area manifest links with the first parkway in Westchester County, New York. When Bronx River Parkway opened in 1923, it embodied many concepts that had been used before but had not been unified. Specific elements that were combined in the 15-mile stretch to Kensico Dam included limited access, gentle curves, and a park-like setting that invited pleasure driving. By contrast, the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, is not primarily a recreational experience, as the Blue Ridge Parkway, or just a utilitarian highway, as an interstate. Rather, it is a transitional project that combines elements of both the parkway and the freeway and as such, can provide comparative data on road design and development in the United States.

Drawing on the popular thinking about the advantages of parkways throughout the United States, proponents of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway went into action. During the 1920s, arguments favoring the roadway revolved around the need to reduce traffic volume and to provide a scenic entrance into both cities, especially the capital. The bandwagon effect for building parkways contributed to its desirability. Writing to Chairman Charles Moore in 1925, Fine Arts Commission member James Greenleaf urged that the route of such a parkway be

cut straight through vergin [sic] territory from the north portal to the City at the end of 16th Street, instead of following the old line of roads out of Maryland Ave. through the narrow streets of Bladensburg and other villages.¹

Greenleaf based much of his opinion on remarks delivered by Jay Downer of the Westchester County Park and Parkway Commission, at a conference held at "Skyland in the Shenandoah Range."² Downer had argued for new road alignments as the least disruptive alternative for local residents, commercial establishments, and control of access. Notably, Downer viewed

a parkway, not necessarily as a boulevard of uniform width lined with double rows of trees but [as] a narrow park of varying width through which single or double lines of traffic wended, all as best suited local topography and conditions.³

1. Greenleaf to Moore, letter dated June 9, 1925, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

Frederic Delano, Chairman of the NCP & PC, strongly supported the new parkway proposal as a means of "connecting the great city of Baltimore with the Federal Capital."⁴ In the same letter, Delano expressed support for the parkway to Col. C.O. Sherrill, chairman of the National Capital Park Commission, countering opposition Sherrill had received from a "Baltimorian" complaining of costs. Delano also made his opinion clear about design matters, stating that a parkway should be a "strip of varying width and roadways on the outer edge and park between, which should be liberally planted with trees wherever possible or retained as forested land."⁵ Delano added that a parkway should vary "in width from 100 to 1000 feet," with an average of about 300 feet.

The *Manufacturers Record*, a periodical published in Baltimore, took a keen interest in the road in the mid-1920s, and exchanged correspondence with Col. Sherrill about a speech he had made in Baltimore during the fall of 1925, favoring a boulevard between the cities. Writing to Sherrill later that fall, Baltimore writer Victor Power sought material for an article in the publication supporting the road. Power made the initial link between the road and the military installations nearby. Power stated that,

the road would have certain military importance and significance. Within call of the roadway would be Fort Myer, Camp Meade, Fort Howard, Baltimore, the Naval Academy, Annapolis, not counting the military adjuncts and establishments in Washington.⁶

The final point in Power's letter cut to the heart of funding the effort: "[Linking the military installations with the roadway would] move the administration to help finance it as a war insurance measure."⁷

Support for this intercity parkway gathered momentum during the late 1920s, when groups like the NCP & PC took up the effort. Executive Officer Ulysses S. Grant III expressed to William Ellicott the desire of the commission for the parkway, calling attention to its recommendation in annual reports from 1927 to 1929. He also pointed out that the pending Capper-Cramton bill included funds for parkway construction as far as Camp Meade.⁸ In the same letter, Grant referred to a regional planning commission in the Baltimore area advocating the parkway. Near the District, the Maryland National

4. Delano to Sherrill, letter dated September 30, 1925, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

5. Ibid.

6. Power to Sherrill, letter dated October 21, 1925, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

7. Ibid.

8. Grant to Ellicott, letter dated March 10, 1930, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126. The name used until World War II was Camp Meade, thereafter Fort Meade.

Capital Park and Planning Commission (established in 1927) would be active in directing and coordinating planning related to projects of mutual interest, such as this proposed parkway.

By 1930, it had become apparent that the major impetus for establishing the parkway came from the Washington, D.C., end of the route. Maryland would have to develop a lobbying effort and build a portion of the road on the land between Baltimore and Camp Meade acquired from private interests. Members of various Washington, D.C., area planning agencies often used arguments specifying the economic advantage that accrued to Westchester County, New York, after the parkway opened there in 1924.

A major portion of the rationale for building the Baltimore-Washington road can be found in a report by T.C. Jeffers, NCP & PC landscape architect.⁹ The purpose, according to Jeffers, was "to attract as much of the passenger vehicle traffic from the present Baltimore Boulevard as possible, leaving this already congested highway to bus and freight traffic."¹⁰ To do this, Jeffers advocated the creation of "a high speed driveway in as direct a line as possible with large radius curves and a minimum number of highway crossings."¹¹ He added that "border roads" should divert local traffic to major crossings of the parkway. By September 1932, Jeffers had drawn a proposed route for the parkway all the way to Camp Meade, which reflected widths advocated earlier by Delano.

Preliminary plans for routes included one that ran from the Anacostia River valley to Indian Creek, then to Laurel before crossing to the Patuxent and Patapsco rivers. A portion of this route crossed the ongoing Beltsville development of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Studies of land use near the routes increased by the mid-1920s, when Gilmore Clarke assumed their charge.¹² Clarke was nationally known in the fields of land planning and parkway design. At the time, he was also chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, successor to Charles Moore.

In a Maryland planning report prepared in 1937, advocates addressed many regional issues including roadways.¹³ Of the new roads proposed in the report, one was a divided four-lane route between

9. "The Baltimore Parkway," unpublished report dated September 16, 1932, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Nolen to Wirth, memorandum dated May 17, 1935, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

13. Maryland State Planning Commission, "Regional Planning, Part IV-Baltimore-Washington-Annapolis Area," November 1937, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

Washington, D.C., and Baltimore. Discussion of the parkway to Baltimore included traffic survey information gathered by the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads in 1932. This indicated that "18 percent of the travelers had as their origin or destination locations other than Maryland, Virginia, or the District of Columbia."¹⁴ In short, intercity needs dominated design considerations. Means taken to raise public support consisted of press releases, feature articles in local newspapers by such advocates as Gilmore Clarke, and reports circulated to members of Congress.

During the summer of 1939, a sizable addition to Camp Meade carried implications for the parkway route. The War Department had obtained funds to add nearly 10,000 acres to the reservation. At a conference in late July, the Camp Meade commander agreed with the planning commissions in attendance to permit the parkway to follow along the edge of the new addition.¹⁵ The land purchase closed most of the gap between Camp Meade and the Agriculture Research Center. Secretary of War Harry H. Woodring advised Delano during the summer of 1940, that as soon as funds became available, land would be acquired,

including the route for this highway, and the War Department will favorably entertain a further request from the proper agencies to use and occupy so much of War Department lands as are necessary to construct the highway in the location herein approved.¹⁶

Just before the attack on Pearl Harbor and American's entry into World War II, cost estimates began to appear in the range of \$12 to \$15 million.¹⁷ Wilson Ballard, chief engineer of the Maryland State Roads Commission, expressed concern about funding the parkway, though the director of planning for the NCP & PC, John Nolen, tempered that view. Nolen and Chairman Delano believed that, although the project seemed costly, monies in an amount greater than "50 percent Federal funds might be available under the Federal Aid Road program" because several federal installations lay along the proposed route.¹⁸

14. Ibid.

15. Delano to MacDonald, letter dated July 31, 1939, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

16. Woodring to Delano, letter dated June 8, 1940, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

17. Minutes of National Capital Park and Planning Commission, September 1941, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

18. Ibid.

In 1942, the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration released \$2 million of National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) funds for the Baltimore-Washington Parkway.¹⁹ These funds provided land acquisition from the Peace Monument at Bladensburg to Greenbelt and from Laurel Road to the Jessup entrance of Fort Meade. Survey work secured funding from both the NCP & PC and the Maryland NCP & PC, whose sources included appropriations made under the Capper-Cramton Act of 1930.

It became more apparent during the war years that federal largesse would be tapped for constructing the parkway and for the managing some portion of it. Originally, the state of Maryland planned to construct it; however, by 1943, the NCP & PC believed that "at least the section from Washington through Camp Meade should be a Federal project, maintained and controlled by the National Park Service."²⁰ Commission minutes added that because the parkway extended from the Anacostia River Parkway, a portion of the District of Columbia park system, it was "eligible for construction by the National Park Service."²¹ Sections of the road not funded by the NIRA could be funded by the National Park Service, but only "as a post-war project."²² For Maryland, this meant it would probably be responsible for funding the portion from Camp Meade to Baltimore, though the NCP & PC hoped Maryland would fund the parkway all the way to Baltimore.²³

A perennially sticky issue concerned the best route for the parkway. Various federal agencies had different points of view, as did the several planning commissions. The major problem related to the portion of the route running from New York Avenue to Greenbelt. The NCP & PC preferred a lowland route along the Anacostia River, whereas the Public Roads Administration favored a route on the higher land to the east. Although all agreed that the route would enter the District at New York Avenue, Delano also desired a feeder into the "Anacostia River Parkway southwest to Constitution Avenue, underpassing all bridges, and finally continuing to the proposed river crossing at Alexandria and over the George Washington Memorial Parkway to Fort Washington."²⁴

19. Demaray to Fleming, letter dated September 28, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

20. National Capital Park and Planning Commission Minutes, November 4, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Delano to Ballard, letter dated September 19, 1941, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

Capper-Cramton funds could be used along the Anacostia River for extension of the park system, but not in "construction of roads except if and as Federal aid highways."²⁵ Typically, the opposing interests compromised. This was due to the persuasiveness of the endorsement of the easterly route by National Park Service Chief Landscape Architect Thomas Vint and the impending deadline, which if not met would result in loss of funds.

In the Beltsville area, the USDA granted a right-of-way across its property that ranged from 400 to 800 feet wide and encompassed 153.868 acres. The right-of-way acquired at Camp Meade comprised 94 acres and "206 acres from the Federal Public Housing Authority through the Greenbelt area."²⁶ It remained, however, for umbrella legislation to be enacted by Congress to lay out the provisions of the new parkway between Washington and Baltimore. The drafting of legislation coincided with construction on small sections of the road using NIRA funds, with deliberations about underground utility conduits, and with discussions over whether to allow buses on the parkway. Late in 1946, National Park Service Associate Director Arthur E. Demaray sent a draft of a proposed bill to Commissioner Thomas H. MacDonald of the Public Roads Administration.²⁷ The bill attempted to define the administering and funding of the parkway. After much discussion on its various sections, the bill was introduced in the House of Representatives on April 8, 1948, and referred to the Committee on Public Works.²⁸ Although it was subjected to rigorous examination and review, the bill remained basically intact. However, it was not passed and signed into law until President Harry S Truman did so in August 1950.

The law provided that the parkway be administered by the secretary of the interior through the National Park Service; monies for parkway would be appropriated yearly to the National Park Service and be used for "continuing the construction, development, maintenance and policing of the Baltimore-Washington . . . Parkways."²⁹ Land for the parkway would be acquired by the United States and considered as an extension "of the park system of the District of Columbia and its environs."³⁰

25. Director to Associate Director, National Park Service, memorandum dated September 7, 1944, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2835.

26. Ibid.

27. Demaray to MacDonald, letter dated December 30, 1946, National Archives, Record Group 79, Box 2835.

28. HR 6177, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 127.

29. Draft of Bill, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 129.

30. Ibid.

Camp Meade remained the northernmost point of federal control, and Anacostia Park served as the southern limit.

According to the new law, determinations of types and classes of vehicles permitted to use the parkway and of the location of access points were to be the responsibility of the secretary of the interior with the concurrence of the Federal Works Agency. Cost estimates of the federal portion of the parkway fell in the \$15 million range, and the same amount was estimated by Maryland for the 12-miles portion from Jessup to the Baltimore city line.³¹ Portions of the route between the two metropolitan areas were in the early stages of construction by 1943, and subsequent sections were completed before passage of the legislation of 1950. Federal appropriations increased after 1950, resulting in completion of the entire parkway by October, 1954. Reporter Wes Barthelmes, of the *Washington Post and Times Herald*, wrote a lengthy article extolling the importance of the new road. It would, he said, supplant Route 1 (Washington-Baltimore Boulevard) and rectify "the delays and seedy and cluttered appearance along . . . Suicide Lane, alias Bloody Mary . . . , where since 1942 there have been 347 persons killed and 4,688 injured in 9,428 accidents."³² Senator Millard Tydings of Maryland, also praised the new parkway and the contributions it made to Maryland and the nation as an important military defense highway and a route of escape in the event of a nuclear war.

Illustrative of the joint effort by the federal government and the state of Maryland is that the portion to Jessup from the District was called a parkway, whereas the state portion was called a freeway. By whatever name, daily traffic counts the first week averaged 21,000 vehicles, 6,000 more than expected.³³ With completion of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, a major alternative route between the two cities became operational.

As usage of the road continued to increase, the joint operation of the parkway by the National Park Service and the state of Maryland worked satisfactorily to a point. In time, however, questions arose about the National Park Service managing what seemed to be a freeway. In 1970, legislation passed in Congress appropriated \$65 million for upgrading the parkway to six lanes and turning jurisdiction over to the state of Maryland.³⁴ However, funds did not become available as soon as desired and in 1978, the enabling legislation was amended to maintain the existing four lanes and "preserve the

31. *Washington Star*, August 4, 14, 1950, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 129.

32. *Washington Post and Times Herald*, October 4, 1954, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 129.

33. *Washington Star*, October 30, 1954, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 129.

34. Public Law 91-605, "Baltimore-Washington Parkway Background Package," no date, photocopied.

Parkway characteristics."³⁵ Maryland became financially strapped and in 1980, unofficially informed the Park Service of its intent not to assume jurisdiction. The administrator of state highways for Maryland made this official in a letter dated July 28, 1981.³⁶ Though the 1970 act and the 1978 amendment never produced the expected transfer, attempts to obtain funding from the federal highway programs continued. Guided by a 1984 plan, "Baltimore-Washington Parkway Design Elements," rehabilitation of the parkway began in the late 1980s.

Legislation

Despite the aesthetics afforded by the finished route, the beginnings of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway were rooted in the more practical desire to lighten traffic on overcrowded roadways. The parkway had been conceived years earlier and became part of a plan by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission to create a route comparable with Mount Vernon Memorial Highway or Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, which was administered by the National Park Service. The purpose espoused by the planning commission was to relieve traffic congestion on existing roadways:

Year by year the need has grown greater. Accidents have increased on the present inadequate roads and the need for such a limited-access road is now imperative. The present roads carry not merely the interstate travel between Maryland and the District of Columbia, but travel from the entire New England and Atlantic seaboard over to and from the Nation's Capital.³⁷

According to Acting Secretary of the Interior C. Girard Davidson, the proposed parkway was to provide limited-access service in "a dignified, protected, safe, and suitable approach" between federal facilities in Maryland and the District of Columbia, as well as between Washington, D.C., and Baltimore.³⁸

In September 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt decreed that \$2 million of unobligated National Industrial Recovery Act funds be turned over to the Public Roads Administration for securing right-of-way between Bladensburg and Fort Meade, Maryland, and for partial grading of the projected road. Meantime, the Bureau of Public Roads initiated arrangements with other government agencies for transfer of required lands at Greenbelt, where a federally subsidized suburban resettlement project existed, and at Beltsville, where an agricultural research center was located. Work completed during the war on the parkway amounted to clearing, grubbing, grading, and draining two 3-mile-long portions.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid. Caltrider to Fish, July 28, 1981.

37. Arthur E. Demaray to Will M. Whittington, January 19, 1950. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Public Works, *Hearings Before the Committee on Public Works ... on H.R. 5990*. 81st Cong., 2d sess., 1950, p. 43.

38. Davidson to Whittington, January 25, 1950, in *ibid.*, p. 44.

One portion ran north of the Defense Highway and east of Bladensburg to Greenbelt; the other ran between Jessup Road and Laurel Road. On completion, the parkway would improve highway facilities for the federal properties and increase their value.³⁹

Little additional work was done on the parkway during the war years. In the late 1940s, renewed activity began to complete the road. In April 1949, legislation was introduced seeking to transfer jurisdiction of Suitland Parkway from the War Assets Administration to the National Park Service. When this measure passed successfully, a similar bill, H.R. 5990, authorizing completion of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway and its control by the National Park Service, was introduced in Congress. Because of the perceived benefits of the parkway in relieving traffic congestion on existing routes, the bill found ready support among concerned public offices, particularly the NCP & PC, the Bureau of Public Roads, and the Department of the Interior, offices that had promoted the Baltimore-Washington Parkway since the 1920s.

Hearings before the House Committee on Public Works on H.R. 5990 took place in February 1950, and offered a variety of opinions regarding the proposed construction. Gordon R. Young, engineer commissioner of the District of Columbia, presented the view that the portion of the project in the District should be funded entirely by the federal government. The contribution of the District, said Young, should be limited to the expense of connecting streets to the parkway where it entered at New York Avenue, a cost estimated at \$2,250,000. Young stated that the parkway would be of limited value to intradistrict traffic. He also stated that the federal government should bear the cost of establishing the parkway in Anacostia Park, within the District, because the great expense would otherwise disrupt the district's own highway program. Young reported that his commission believed that the National Park Service should administer the parkway in the District the same way the agency was to administer the parkway in Maryland. The primary purpose of the route, according to Young, was to furnish an alternative road between Baltimore and Washington; further, if the parkway should connect with roads and bridges leading south, it would provide a through route for southbound traffic thereby clearing District streets of heavy truck traffic.⁴⁰

Others testifying at the hearings related other objectives for the parkway. Harry Thompson, assistant superintendent for National Capital Parks, reminded committee members that the original intent when

39. C.V. Whitney to Whittington, January 24, 1950, in *ibid.*, pp. 40-41; U.S. Congress, House, *Providing for the Construction, Development, and Administration, and Maintenance of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway in the State of Maryland and Its Extension into the District of Columbia as a Part of the Park System of the District of Columbia and Its Environs by the Secretary of the Interior, and for other Purposes*. H. Rept. No. 1785, 81st Cong., 2d sess., 1950, p. 3.

40. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Public Works, *Hearings Before the Committee on Public Works ... on H.R. 5990*. 81st Cong., 2d sess., 1950, pp. 1-7.

construction got underway in 1942, was to serve the federal areas in the neighborhood of Jessup Road, and that it was the state of Maryland that had urged that the parkway be continued on to Baltimore. Thompson underscored his remarks by stating that the project would not even have begun were it not to serve Fort Meade, Greenbelt, and the Beltsville area. Although the parkway would facilitate access to the new Baltimore-Washington airport, the route was not built to accommodate that traffic; rather, the location of the airport was based on the location of the parkway. (The city of Baltimore's chief interest, however, lay in this fact.) The Maryland Highway Department was not building the artery primarily because of ongoing secret training activities at Fort Meade which meant that the Department of the Army could easily retain control over the federally owned road. Further, the existing Defense Highway from Fort Meade carried approximately 50,000 vehicles per day, and the new road promised to alleviate that congestion. Thus, the Baltimore-Washington Parkway presented a multiple-use highway.⁴¹

Subsequent witnesses echoed these views. Of note was the presentation of Thomas H. MacDonald, commissioner of the Bureau of Public Roads, who highlighted the national emergency needs of the parkway in relation to Fort Meade, a permanent army command headquarters. MacDonald's remarks augmented the views of Secretary of the Army Kenneth C. Royall, who in the previous year had suggested that "the projected Baltimore-Washington highway will be of benefit to the National Military Establishment." MacDonald pointed out the need for the route to serve not only Fort Meade's 10,000 military and civilian residents, but the District of Columbia Training School (900 people), the Beltsville Research Center (2,500 employees), the Patuxent Wildlife Refuge (50 employees), and the Greenbelt settlement with its 7,062 residents. A Maryland congressman, Landsdale G. Sasscer, noted that construction of the roadway should proceed because the surveying and engineering was already complete and the federal government needed to finish the job because neither the state nor county governments could afford the work. Like other witnesses, Sasscer observed that the completed parkway would relieve congestion on area roads, particularly the north-south route U.S. 1.⁴²

In March 1950, following the hearings on H.R. 5990, the Committee on Public Works reported favorably on the measure and recommended that, upon completion of several minor changes, the bill pass Congress. One amendment to the legislation specified that "the cost of construction of the parkway shall not exceed the additional sum of \$13,000,000." Another added almost 1/2 mile to the projected length of the road, at the southern end, complying with a request of the commissioners of the District

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-15.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-48, 52-69. Secretary Royall's remarks appear in U.S. Congress, House, *Providing for the Development, Administration, and Maintenance of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway and the Suitland Parkway in the State of Maryland as an Extension of the Park System of the District of Columbia and Its Environs by the Secretary of the Interior*. H.R. 2214, 81st Cong., 1st sess., 1949, pp. 5-6.

of Columbia. In the final report on the bill, the purpose of the parkway delineated was primarily to relieve traffic congestion and reduce hazardous road conditions:

It appears to be conceded by all who have studied the problem that any new road facility between Baltimore and Washington should be on a new location where adequate right-of-way can be obtained at reasonable cost, and should be in the nature of a parkway with divided roadways, limited access, and separation of grades at all crossings, with truck traffic restricted to the use of the present Baltimore Boulevard.⁴³

Proceeding as originally contemplated, the project would carry on the start made under the president's authority in 1942 and, so it was thought, be completed in between 1945 and 1947.

Fearing that a precedent might be established regarding the federal funding for the parkway, the committee's report noted the peculiar federal interest in this project resulting from the presence of Fort Meade and other federal government installations. The route would "provide a much needed means of quick communication between such activities and the headquarters offices of the Government departments in Washington."⁴⁴ Thus, Maryland agreed to complete the remaining segment of the parkway between Baltimore and Fort Meade.

In July 1950, the Senate concurred in the recommendation that H.R. 5990 pass without further amendment, and within a few weeks the bill became law. Section 2 presented a succinct rationale for Baltimore-Washington Parkway,

The parkway shall be constructed, developed, operated, and administered as a limited access road primarily to provide a protected, safe, and suitable approach for passenger-vehicle traffic to the National Capital and for an additional means of access between the several Federal establishments adjacent thereto and the seat of government in the District of Columbia.⁴⁵

On August 3, 1950, the United States Congress passed Public Law 643, providing "for the construction, development, administration, and maintenance of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway," running from the outskirts of Baltimore into the District of Columbia to the entrance of the nation's capital. The legislation represented realization of a parkway concept that began after World War I and that

43. Ibid., p. 3.

44. U.S. Congress, Senate, *Providing for the Construction, Development, Administration, and Maintenance of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway in the State of Maryland and its Extension into the District of Columbia, as a Part of the Park System of the District of Columbia and Its Environs by the Secretary of the Interior*. S. Rept. No. 2040, 81st Cong., 2d sess., 1950, p. 1.

45. U.S., *Statutes at Large*, LXIV, p. 401. In June, 1952, Congress increased the appropriation for building the Baltimore-Washington Parkway to \$14,500,000. U.S., *Statutes at Large*, LXVI, p. 159.

included many of the most modern features of parkway planning and design. Notably, on its completion in 1954, the multilane road would represent a unique balance with the surrounding landscape as a result of its application of continuous curvature and its graduated median width.⁴⁶

Design

Design concepts and design information appear infrequently in the historical literature for Baltimore-Washington Parkway. Scattered references provide a brief glimpse into design elements, especially those documented by the Bureau of Public Roads. The bureau recommendations noted in the design section of the previous chapter affirm guidelines used on the Baltimore-Washington Parkway. Designers such as T.C. Jeffers sought to include diversity in the route by considering topography that would permit "various kinds of recreation," such as informational waysides and lakes near Branchville.⁴⁷ Said Jeffers, "picnic areas are to be provided at suitable locations" for both residents and through travelers so that they may have "pleasant resting and lunching places."⁴⁸ Of note, he added the opinion that, "it might be desirable to establish a model wayside camping ground for tourists," on the Beltsville property.⁴⁹ This suited the other design concepts considered. As Nolen expressed to Delano, a parkway should be a "limited way but the dual highway is the coming thing for intercity and regional routes."⁵⁰ In 1932, traffic survey information indicated that intercity needs dominated design considerations.

There is good reason to believe that the Baltimore-Washington Parkway had a different design character than National Park Service efforts on the Natchez Trace and Blue Ridge parkways. In attempting to locate a model of the parkway from Baltimore to Washington for a trade show, the planning director of the NCP & PC commented that Park Service parkways are "totally different in type from the proposed Baltimore parkway."⁵¹ Designers envisioned a much higher speed on a parkway connecting two major metropolitan areas. And although it was called a parkway, it did not meander and undulate across the landscape as earlier parkways had. It did, however, encompass a new alignment, thereby adhering to a parkway design concept by not adapting to existing routes.

46. U.S. *Statutes at Large*, LXIV, pp. 400-402; Christopher Tunnard and Boris Pushkarev, *Man-Made America: Chaos or Control? An Inquiry into Selected Problems of Design in the Urbanized Landscape* (New York: Harmony Books, 1963), p. 167.

47. Jeffers, unpublished briefing sheet dated June 4, 1935, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Nolen to Delano, memorandum dated March 16, 1936, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

51. Nolen to Lang, letter dated January 4, 1939, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

Once construction began, an early guiding principle for the parkway sought to retain native and existing vegetation. After agreement on alignment near Beltsville, National Park Service management advised workers to protect all live trees and shrubs, especially small dogwood trees.⁵² The resident landscape architect on the parkway project, Domenico Annese, recalls that he followed the important design concept of preserving the natural landscape.⁵³ Preservation meant enhancing the existing plant materials and not planting any exotic materials.⁵⁴ An exception, he remembers, involved severe erosion on the southern end, which the National Park Service had stabilized by planting Japanese lespedeza.⁵⁵ For a Bureau of Public Roads perspective on the design of the project see Appendix A. Consistency of design features with other parkways is illustrated by rock work on culverts illustrated in Appendixes B and C.

Baltimore-Washington Parkway reflects the design elements in common usage back to the Westchester County experience of the 1920s. Its character has continued despite uncertainty over who would manage it, despite critical budget shortages to maintain its parkway character, and despite continuous and increasing pressure to make it a high-speed, interstate-like route between the two major metropolitan areas.

52. Demaray to Symons, letter dated July 30, 1934, National Archives, Record Group 328, Box 126.

53. Telephone conversation with Domenico Annese, December 2, 1987.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON PARKWAY

GENERAL

Description

This report covers a history and general description of the construction of the new Baltimore-Washington Parkway, which was completed and opened to traffic in October, 1954.

For many years it had become increasingly apparent that the highway facilities between the two large cities, that served by old U. S. Route No. 1, was becoming more and more inadequate to accommodate the rapidly increasing amount of traffic, which with the large number of trucks and buses, had reached such proportions as to give this highway one of the worst accident records in the whole country.

As there were four large Federal reservations in the area between the two cities and east of U. S. Route No. 1, namely the Greenbelt Housing Project, the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, the District of Columbia Home for Feeble Minded Children, and Fort Geo. G. Meade Army Post, the Federal Government was vitally interested in a highway that would give easy access to these areas, as well as help transportation between the two cities themselves.

Preliminary studies for a Parkway in this general location were made as early as 1933 by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The project was definitely proposed in the regional planning report issued by the Maryland State Planning Commission in November 1937, entitled "Baltimore-Washington-Annapolis Area." Reconnaissance of the area was made by the Bureau of Public Roads in November 1938, and studies were continued until a satisfactory general location was developed through the Fort Meade and Beltsville Research areas. Later on, informal agreement was reached that the Bureau of Public Roads would develop surveys between Washington and the northern limits of Fort Meade, and that the Maryland Roads Commission would develop surveys between that point and Baltimore.

Federal recognition of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway took place in 1942. In September of that year in compliance with a directive from the President, the Federal Works Administrator allocated \$2,000,000 of National Industrial Recovery Act funds to the Bureau of Public Roads for the purpose of starting construction of the Parkway, and for the acquisition of necessary rights-of-way land not already owned by the Government between Bladensburg and Fort Meade, Maryland. It was established that the Federal Government would have charge of construction from New York Avenue in the District of Columbia to Jessup Road near the northern boundary of Fort Meade, a length of about 18-1/2 miles. With this directive and allocation of funds all rights-of-way through private holdings were acquired, and approximately six miles of grading operations on the north end were completed in the fall of 1947. From Jessup Road to Baltimore the Maryland State Roads Commission had charge of the construction of a modern freeway as a part of their regular Federal-aid program.

Both projects are of the most modern type of design, with full control of access, no crossings at grade, and a wide right-of-way to provide attractive roadsides.

A bill (H.R.5990) was enacted by the 2nd Session of the 81st Congress on August 3, 1950, transferring the Parkway to the National Park Service, and providing that "it should be constructed, developed, operated, and administered as a limited access road, primarily to provide a protected, safe and suitable approach to the National Capital, and for an additional means of access between several large Federal installations and the District of Columbia." The Act also provided that funds appropriated for parkways by the Department of the Interior Act for each fiscal year would be available for work on the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, and that the cost of construction of the Parkway should not exceed the additional sum of \$13,000,000, over the \$2,000,000 previously appropriated in the directive of 1942. Due to the increased price index for highway construction after 1950, it was later realized that additional funds in the approximate amount of \$1,500,000 would be required for completion of major construction work.

Reconnaissance and Preliminary Surveys

In order to determine the probable location of a parkway between the two cities, and through or adjacent to the Federal areas involved, a reconnaissance survey was made by Public Roads in November 1938. With three railroads and one principal highway already connecting the two cities, the best locations were already taken. This reconnaissance developed a satisfactory line from the city limits of Washington to a point well north of Fort Meade, the most northerly of the four Federal reservations. Reconnaissance was made of three possible lines in the Beltsville vicinity to determine whether it was possible to go around rather than through this reservation. The line finally adopted crossed the reservation at its narrowest point, and skirted the future western boundary of Fort Meade, and was agreed to by the Agriculture and War Departments in January 1940. Early in 1943 further study of the location between the District of Columbia and Greenbelt was undertaken. Four preliminary lines on this seven-mile section were developed, and approximate estimates of cost made for each. An experienced appraiser in private practice was engaged to estimate rights-of-way costs on each. All lines were projected on wide topography strips. Profiles were established and approximate estimates of grading and other quantities were made.

When these estimates were completed in the fall of 1944, it was decided to adopt the most easterly line which followed the 1938 reconnaissance, except at two points where new real estate development prevented.

In addition to the New York Avenue Connection in the District of Columbia, an interchange called the "Kenilworth Interchange," just outside

the District provides for a connection along Kenilworth Avenue with the new East Capitol Street bridge across the Anacostia River, and also a connection with the new Annapolis Freeway now being built from Annapolis to Washington by the State of Maryland.

Location

In the selection of the location, no effort was made to obtain tangent alignment. The free use of curves made it possible to fit the topography better and to reduce the property damages in the right-of-way takings. Usually the north and south bound roadways were located separately, and at varying distances from each other. Where the roadways are together, the median strip is at least 15 feet wide. At some points they are separated as widely as 400 feet. Often they are separated by woods. No effort was made to keep the profile grade of each roadway the same.

The development of a location and plans followed generally, except for right-of-way acquisitions, the established procedure used on eastern Parkway projects, under which the National Park Service does landscape and architectural work.

The reconnaissance line as finally determined was marked on U.S.G.S. maps, and "flagged" in the field. A random transit line was run following the flagged line, levels taken and benches established. Following this, contours were taken by hand level or plane table, and a contour strip plotted approximately 400 feet wide on a scale of one inch to 100 feet. At crossings of paved roads the contour strip was extended to a width of 1,000 feet or more to develop information for the interchange design. All buildings, property lines, and structures were plotted on these maps.

Plans and Maps

Design standards established by Public Roads in November 1943 followed those for rural sections of inter-regional highways in the report "Inter-regional Highways," of January 5, 1944. The road was designed for a 75 mile speed, with a maximum curvature of 2°-30' and superelevation at all curves above 0°-15'. All curves above 1° were spiralled. The maximum grade in this rolling country is 3%, except at one point where 4% was approached. Traffic lanes are 12 feet wide. Three lanes were graded in each direction, with two paved initially. Shoulders are 10 feet wide to beginning of rounding. The median strip is not less than 15 feet wide. Side slopes are 1 on 4 to heights of 10 feet, and steepest slopes are 2 to 1.

Upon the contour maps a spline projection of the center line was made, a separate projection for the north and south bound roads. Profiles were plotted from the topography, trial grade lines laid, and a final center line and grade ultimately established. After this, grading plans

for all sections were prepared from the projection. These include plan and profile in general accordance with accepted highway practice. The 5-foot contour lines and the preliminary transit lines were shown, as well as the center line and profile of each roadway. The typical cross section for grading required that approximately 8 feet of selected soil of a granular nature be placed on all fills and in all cuts where the natural soil did not consist of such material. Grading of the roadway was planned so that a pavement may be placed later on approximately 12 inches of granular material, with shoulders of the same material.

Stripping and storing of topsoil was required in the grading contracts, replacement to be made in later operations after the paving was completed.

Interchanges

There are no crossings of the parkway at grade, and entrance to and exit from it will be only at the public road interchanges. Such interchanges are provided at nine public road crossings, not including the interchange at the District of Columbia. Of these, four provide access to Federal reservations, four to the suburban communities of Elmdensburg, Riverdale, and Cheverly, and one provides access in a rural area for the state road running from Laurel to Bowie, Maryland. Designs for these interchanges differ according to the probable traffic volume to and from the parkway, and vary from the standard full cloverleafs to less elaborate connections.

A complicated problem in design is presented near the District of Columbia line, where the parkway joins the proposed Washington-Annapolis expressway at what is called the Kenilworth interchange on an extension of Kenilworth Avenue from the District. In the future it may be decided to extend a parkway from this point down Anacostia Valley. This future traffic hub is in a flat area often overflowed by the Anacostia River near its crossing by the Pennsylvania Railroad. An exhaustive study of this problem was made by the Urban Roads Division of Public Roads under the direction of Mr. Joseph Barnett, and a design presented which provides a solution for each of the successive stages of route development. In the first stage, New York Avenue will be connected with the parkway. In the next stage New York Avenue will be split into two forks of a Y, one being the Baltimore Parkway and the other being the Annapolis Expressway.

In the possible final stage, the extension of the Anacostia Parkway from the south over the Pennsylvania Railroad will be joined to the Y.

Structures

Besides the nine highway-crossing structures at which access to the parkway is provided, there are two crossings of branch line railroads,

three river crossings, and five local road structures. Minimum clearances for the structures conform to the standards recommended in the Interregional Report. Underpasses have at least 4-1/2 feet of clearance beyond the pavement edge on the left side of each roadway, and normal shoulder width on the right side. The central island is 15 feet wide. Vertical clearance is at least 14 feet at the edge of pavements and, because of the arch structure, is more than 16 feet in the center of each roadway. Generally, structures which pass over the parkway are stone-faced, and those beneath the parkway concrete-faced.

The structures and their construction are described in detail in a separate "Final Construction Report for Bridges."

Right-of-Way

Right-of-way obtained for the parkway varies from a minimum width of 400 feet up to a maximum of 1,200 feet at some of the important interchanges.

From private owners a total of 149 tracts were required. Condemnation proceedings were initiated for all except one. The cost of the necessary rights-of-way from private owners was around \$400,000, including costs of appraisals, land surveys, title searches, etc.

The total number of acres required from private owners was 832. Improvements taken included four houses ranging in appraised value from \$6,000 to \$9,200, six from \$4,000 to \$5,500, nine from \$2,000 to \$4,000, six from \$1,000 to \$2,000, and ten shanties having a value of less than \$1,000. The only commercial buildings taken were two corrugated iron hangars at a privately owned commercial airfield.

Nearly all of the property damage occurred in the first six miles out of Washington as might be expected.

The length of parkway over which privately-owned land was required is 10.3 miles.

The total number of acres taken was 832.

The approximate cost of right-of-way per mile was \$39,000, and the approximate cost per acre including improvements was \$480.

The acreage taken includes unimproved woodland, valuable truck farms, suburban lots, improved homes, potential industrial sites, and possible home sites.

The right-of-way for the sections of the parkway passing through the Federal reservations simply involved the transfer of the property by the several agencies who owned it.

Construction

Construction of the parkway was done in a progressive manner by letting contracts for various sections of grading, structure, and paving projects. It was divided into 11 grading projects, 8 paving and 18 bridge projects for purposes of construction. The grading projects included the clearing and grubbing, excavation and borrow for roadway, and small drainage structures. Most of the bridge projects included fills and grading immediately adjacent to the structures. Paving projects usually included placing of the granular topping material beneath the pavement, and also provision for slope top soiling and seeding. The contracts were done under specifications of Public Roads F.P.41 of 1941, and special provisions written to cover each particular job. Wage rates were set by the Labor Department in advance of advertisement for bids.

Grading operations were done usually by large scraper outfits, both rubber tired and crawler type hauling units being used, with capacities of from 10 to 30 yards each.

The grading was done for a width of three 12-ft. lanes and shoulders for each of the north and south bound roadways, with initial paving of two 12-ft. lanes for each.

With the initial appropriation of \$2,000,000 for the parkway, four grading projects were completed between July 1945 and August 1947. No further work was done from this time until January 1951, during which period no funds were available. From the latter date until October 1954, when all the parkway was opened to traffic, work proceeded on the various grading, structure, and paving projects.

Bidding by contractors was lively on the various projects when advertised and very good unit prices were received. The prices for unclassified excavation (there was no appreciable amount of rock) on 7 major grading projects ranged from 29 to 37 cents per cubic yard, with an average of 32 cents per cubic yard.

On the 5 large paving projects 8" depth reinforced cement concrete pavement ranged from \$4.00 to \$4.32 per square yard with an average of \$4.20 per sq. yd., and asphalt concrete pavement, used on the connections at the interchanges, had unit prices of from \$7.25 to \$11.00 per ton, with an average for 9 projects of \$8.85 per ton.

On 17 concrete bridges the concrete unit prices ranged from \$30.00 to \$49.00 per cubic yard, with an average of \$42.08 per cubic yard, and reinforcing steel ran from 10 to 13 cents per pound with an average of 11-1/2 cents per pound.

On two bridges using steel girders, the structural steel was 20 and 21 cents per pound.

On 9 structures the stone facing ranged from \$90.00 to \$122.00 per cubic yard, with an average of \$109.50 per cubic yard. The granite dimensioned masonry ran from \$265.00 to \$375.00, with an average of \$328.55 per cubic yard on 7 bridges where it was used.

Reinforced concrete box culverts were included in the grading contracts, and concrete for same was obtained from nearby commercial plants and delivered at the site in large transit-mix trucks, usually of 5 cubic yards capacity. Pipe culverts were of reinforced concrete, and varied in size from 18 to 48 inches in diameter. On some of the early work plain concrete semi-circular arches of 6 and 9-foot spans were used, thus eliminating reinforcing steel which was under wartime controls.

More detailed descriptions of construction operations on the various items of the contracts are given in the reports herewith for each individual project.

In addition to the principal projects for grading, paving, and structures, several separate contracts were let for such miscellaneous work as smoothing, topsoiling, and seeding slopes that had been cut by erosion on some of the old grading, and also for fencing along the right-of-way lines through government property, guardrail along the fills, traffic signs, and outlet and frontage roads for adjacent property owners.

Engineering

All surveys, plans, and supervision of construction were by the Bureau of Public Roads, Department of Commerce, with the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, cooperating on the landscape and architectural work.

General plans were approved by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and plans for structures by the National Fine Arts Commission. Plans were sent to the Maryland State Roads Commission, the county engineer, and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission for approval of local road changes.

All plans were approved by the National Park Service, who also prepared the plans for landscape and architectural features.

The connections with the city of Washington required the approval of the District of Columbia Highway Department, the Maryland Roads Commission, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

For the Bureau of Public Roads the work was under the supervision of Mr. H. J. Spelman, as Division Engineer. Early reconnaissance studies were made by Mr. E. G. Widdleton, Senior Highway Engineer. Surveys, plans,

and construction were under Mr. F. E. Winter, Senior Highway Engineer, until January 1, 1946, and after that date under Mr. E. L. Tarwater, District Engineer. Bridge design was under Mr. C. D. Geisler, Division Bridge Engineer. Design for the interchange with the Annapolis Expressway near the Washington City line was made by the Urban Roads Division of Public Roads, of which Mr. Joseph Barnett is Chief. All plans were also reviewed by that Division. Mr. Harry Thompson, of the National Park Service, directed landscape and architectural work. Mr. B. L. Breeze and Mr. Dominic Annese were Resident Landscape Architects for the Park Service, and Mr. W. M. Hausmann was their architect for the bridges.

During construction each project was supervised by a project engineer and such assistants as were needed for the layout and inspection of the work.

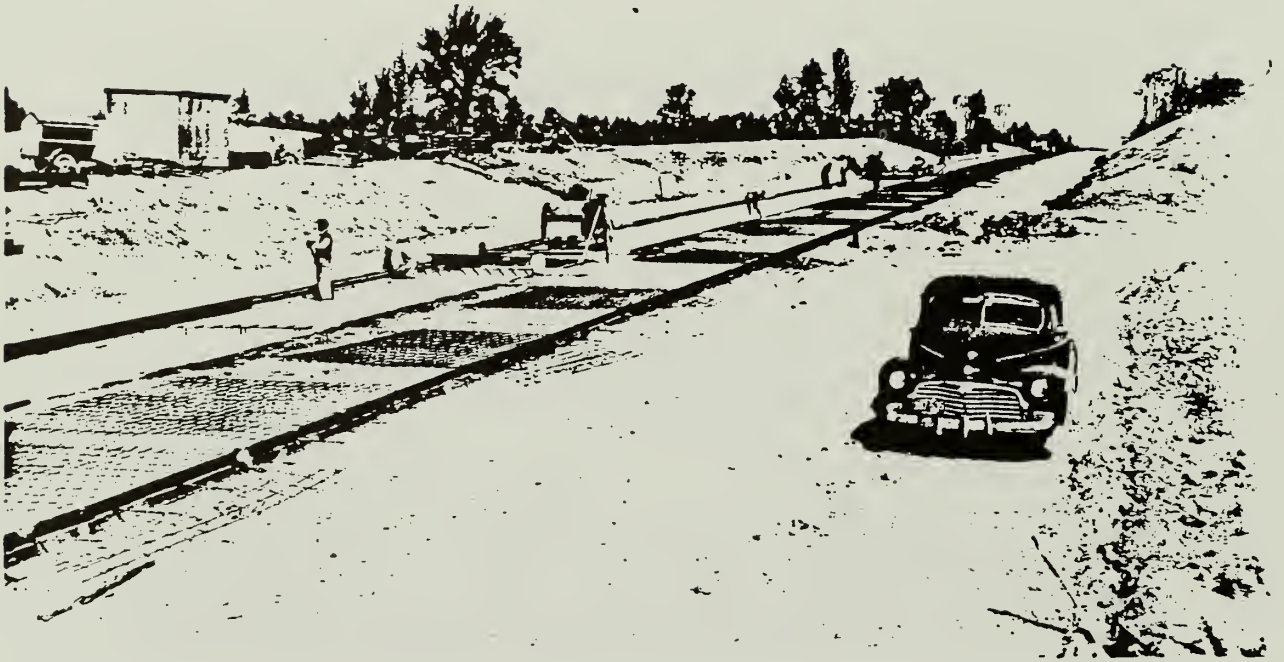
This report was prepared by T. D. Harris, Highway Bridge Engineer for Mr. Tarwater's District.

APPENDIX B



Stone Faced Culvert Headwalls.

APPENDIX C



Low Transfer Assembly and Paving Forms.

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